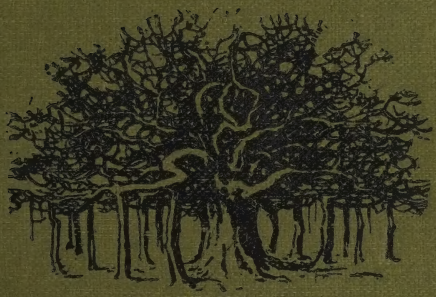

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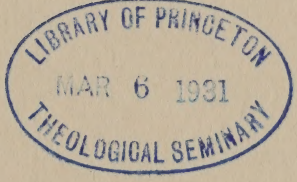

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THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA

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THE purpose of this series of small volumes on the leading forms which religious life has taken in India is to produce really reliable information for the use of all who are seeking the welfare of India. Editors and writers alike desire to work in the spirit of the best modern science, looking only for the truth. But, while doing so and seeking to bring to the interpretation of the systems under review such imagination and sympathy as characterize the best study in the domain of religion to-day, they believe they are able to shed on their work fresh light drawn from the close religious intercourse which they have each had with the people who live by the faith herein described; and their study of the relevant literature has in every instance been largely supplemented by persistent questioning of those likely to be able to give information. In each case the religion described is brought into relation with Christianity. It is believed that all readers, in India at least, will recognize the value of this practical method of bringing out the salient features of Indian religious life.

THE SACRED TULASĪ

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THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA

WITHOUT THE PALE

The Life Story of An Outcaste

BY

MARGARET SINCLAIR STEVENSON, M.A., D.Sc.

ASSOCIATION PRESS
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PREFACE

ANY book that in any way throws light upon the life and religion of the Untouchable is sure of a welcome at this time. In a memorable article in *Young India*, in 1924, Mr. Gandhi summed up strongly against the work of Christian Missions, but with the significant admission that it was to Christian influence India owed her awakening to a sense of her guilt for the crime of Untouchability. Five years later, in an interview in January, 1929, Mr. Gandhi was able to tell Dr. Mott that he had been surprised beyond measure at the results that the campaign for the removal of Untouchability had achieved in that short space of time. Truly the leaven is at work, but there is much to be done before the whole lump is leavened.

In this monograph on the Ḍheḍs of Gujarāt Mrs. Stevenson has left the broader aspects of the problem of Untouchability alone, and, as an expert in the field of anthropology, has given us an intensive study of the rites and ceremonies that are supposed to ensure protection to the Untouchable at all the great crises of his life, right from the cradle to the grave. It is the work of a scholar-student, and one of the author's main objects in writing the book is to inspire others with an enthusiasm like her own for research along these lines. There are few doors in this region that cannot be opened with sympathy as a key, and this little book shows into what fascinating fields they may lead.

GEORGE WILSON

Stevenson Memorial Divinity College,
Ahmedabad,
1st September, 1930.

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CHAPTER I

THE ḌHEḌ IN THE VILLAGE STREET

As you walk through a little country town in Western India, you cannot help being struck with its beauty. The winding, irregular streets are lined on either side with old-world houses, whose wonderful carved balconies overhang the footpath. Here and there the brown line of the roofs is broken by the gleaming white dome of mosque or temple, or the deep green foliage of some shadow-giving tree will intercept the row of buildings; whilst in Gujarāt, at any rate, a space may have been left between the houses for an exquisitely carved and turreted stone pigeon-house.

The shops add an interest that is lacking at home, for here there are no hideous plate-glass fronts, since each shop is open to the street; the walls that might have separated it being simply a wooden shutter that is taken down in the morning and put up again at nightfall. Inside, like a spider inviting you into his den, sits the old proprietor, perhaps a grain merchant, with samples of his goods piled in front of him (if you ever fall into his clutches, beware!) or a silver-smith may be squatting just inside his shop, actually hammering at the bracelets he is hoping to sell you. Since Mr. Gandhi's propaganda, cloth merchants' shops are of special interest, and you are in accordance with the prevailing sentiment of the country when, for your future tablecloth, you decline to look at tawdry Manchester wares, but instead insist on buying strong wear-resisting, country-woven cloth, with horses, elephants, and gaily caparisoned riders all curvetting round it.

Up and down the roadway, passing and repassing the shops, go what are surely the most attractive crowds in the world, in their jocund trappings of white, red and green.

It is partly, no doubt, the bright sunlight that makes you feel so gay and light-hearted, but chiefly it is the charm of the people you meet. Their faces are so supremely lovable, and their greetings so friendly. They are genuinely interested in you and all your doings.

Find your way to the well. Did you ever see a more charming set of women than these, who, with their gleaming water-vessels on their heads, are coming to draw water?

As you look at the men and women passing up and down the street, you begin to notice little differences. Some of the men have three white horizontal lines on their foreheads, the sign of the follower of Śiva; others have the red perpendicular lines that mark the followers of Vishṇu. The hats or caps the men wear, the shape of their turbans—nay more, the very way they button their coats—are instructive, for in India you can often tell a man's birthplace, profession, and religion from his dress. Such is the diversity of creed, caste, sect, and sub-sect, that one village street can furnish enough material for research to last the keenest student of social anthropology for a life-time, since India is indeed the greatest university in the world.

In this book the writer would like to draw your attention to one special man in the street—that man who is standing outside the temple doorway. Other worshippers, discarding their shoes, are passing into the courtyard of the shrine, but he stands humbly without the gate, *salaaming* from afar to the god whose face he feign would look upon. The man is a spiritual convict, undergoing penal servitude for the whole of his life for the unknown sins committed in a previous but forgotten existence; his very presence would pollute not only his fellow-worshippers but also the god himself.

Watch our friend as he walks down the road, see how carefully the other passers-by avoid touching him, and remember that those very people who are withdrawing the hem of their garment from contact with him with such cruel meticulousness are in many ways the kindliest on earth. Yet in the old days our friend would have had to place a stag's horn in his turban, that all might be warned

not to touch him; to wear a spittoon in front of him, lest his spittle should pollute the earth; and to drag thorns behind him, that his very footprints might be effaced, and the soil not defiled for a proud Brāhman's tread; for he belongs to the Ḍheḍs, one of the Untouchable Castes.[1]

He is passing a school now; and for a moment looks in longingly, for the Ḍheḍs are a clever race and love learning, and, given the opportunity, prove the quickest of pupils; but, though Indians are supremely the child-lovers, our friend cannot send his children to that school. Even if the headmaster was willing to try the experiment, the other children would never consent to be contaminated by sitting beside Ḍheḍs, and there would be a general stampede.

Watch him as he shops. He humbly stands before the shopkeeper, points out from afar the goods he wants, they are thrown down to him, and the money he offers in payment has either to be held up and dropped into the shopkeeper's hand, or put on the ground; in no case may he touch the shopkeeper.

At the well, his case is hardest of all. The well was probably built by public money for the good of all, but were he to try and draw water from it, there would be a public riot, in which he would certainly be beaten, and very likely killed; for contact with his water-vessel would defile all the water of the well. There may be near the village a well specially set apart for Ḍheḍs, and marked off by a dead bone hung near it (the presence of this bone warns the high-caste Hindu not to draw water from this contaminated and contaminating source), but there are many villages that have no such well, and then what is our friend to do? He must just stand humbly by and wait till some member of a higher caste of his charity draws water and pours it into this Untouchable's water-vessel. Even the charitable would take extraordinary care not to come into contact with the Ḍheḍ or his water-vessel, but would raise his own pot and pour the water from some height above.

And supposing there is no kindly helper at hand, our

[1] Curiously enough, the classes below the Ḍheḍs never had to submit to these particular humiliations.

friend would just have to endure, as best he might, his thirst, the terrible thirst that comes in India, waiting for some one to give him a cup of cold water.

India is in many ways the kindliest land in the world, as any one who has been nursed through illness by Indians will testify; yet in this lovable country you may see, in times of famine and epidemic, a dying man lying untended in the open street. Our common humanity at its pitiful extremity lies there appealing, and appealing in vain, against the iron bands of caste that make it impossible for any passer by, however humane, to stoop and touch an 'Untouchable.'

It is not only the actual touch of the outcaste that defiles, in some places his very shadow pollutes. If, as you loiter through the village, pausing to notice the alluring nooks and corners, and the almost Italian effect of some courtyard that opens out of it, you fear that your dilatory pace may hinder some busy worker, who courteously hesitates to pass in front of you, and you turn to him and suggest his walking on ahead, he may retort indignantly, 'Why are you afraid of my shadow? I am no Ḍheḍ!'

Instead, however, of allowing a Ḍheḍ to follow us, let us follow our friend as, his shopping finished, he turns down the main street, out through the village gates, and finds his way along a lane that leads towards the separated group of houses that cluster under the village wall, but without its pale.

The lane is extraordinarily dirty and unpleasant. It is evidently used as a latrine by the people of the village. Passing along it as quickly as possible, we come upon irregular coteries of houses. The first group may be inhabited by leather workers, the Chamārs.[1] If so, we shall notice the still hairy skins of dead animals lying loathsome and untanned on the verandahs of the mud-built houses. But that will probably be the only untidiness we shall see. The outskirts of this tiny Chamār hamlet will be horrid indeed, straw and human refuse forming a sort of rampart

[1] For further details of these interesting people see *The Chamārs*, by Geo. Briggs (Religious Life of India Series).

round it; but once you get beyond that wall of mess and muddle and into the space between the row of houses, the place is clean, though not sweet-smelling.

Pick your way to the next hamlet, which is only a hundred yards distant. Here again dirt and disgust hedge in a cleanish space, and the houses themselves are bright and gay, with mud-coloured walls, often decorated with alluring frescoes of blue elephants, green peacocks, and brilliant railway trains. But alas! the air is all polluted by the reek of carrion, for the corpse of a defunct buffalo has just been dragged in!

The inhabitants of this hamlet are Ḍheḍs, and earn their livelihood by weaving the coarse cotton that was almost being driven out of the market by the mill-manufactured article, till Mr. Gandhi's agitation brought it back into favour again.

If only the ever-present smells would be quiet, and let you forget them, you would find much to admire in this little Ḍheḍ hamlet. The double row of brown mud dwellings is broken by the fresh green leaves of a *nīm* tree, and in front of many of the gaily decorated houses some man or woman is turning a spinning wheel, whilst fat brown babies, slightly clad in bangle or anklet as their sole covering, play about in the warm dust.

Here, too, in this tiny cluster of houses without the city wall, you may find at the present moment the truth of the whole political situation in India. Here are some of the Untouchables whose untouchability Mr. Gandhi longs to remove; here are the users of the spinning wheel which he seeks to popularize, and here also you will find the users of that strong drink he is trying to banish. What voice are these folk to be given in the future government of India, and what safeguards are to be erected to protect them against future oppression?

CHAPTER II

WHO ARE THE ḌHEḌS?

In Gujarāt there are seven classes of people who are considered 'Untouchable' by caste Hindus, namely, Ḍheḍs; leather-workers; arrow-makers; rope-makers; strolling players; Ḍheḍ bards; scavengers or sweepers, who are also basket-makers; and the priests of these classes.

Amongst these the Ḍheḍs are considered to rank higher than any of the others.

It seems probable that Ḍheḍs proper are only found in Gujarāt and Kāṭhiāwār, though they have connections, if not near relatives, elsewhere.[1] They are reckoned amongst the unclean castes, but, as a matter of fact, the degree of contempt in which they are held differs considerably in different localities. Even in places as close together as Ānand and Borsad the difference is most marked, Ānand being far more caste-ridden than Borsad; whilst in Kāṭhiāwār, Ḍheḍs are forced to travel separately in certain railway carriages labelled 'Ḍheḍs,' an indignity which is not placed on them in Gujarāt.

Again, Hindus treat Ḍheḍs differently according to the occupation they follow; clerks and servants in European employ being held as less 'unclean' than those who follow more unsavoury occupations. But the vital difference in Indian eyes between one class of Ḍheḍs and another is whether they eat carrion or not. It is impossible to overestimate the horror with which an orthodox Hindu, whom nothing would induce to touch even ordinary meat, looks

[1] They will eat, though they do not intermarry, with the Malāi of Mārwār and the Mahār of Mahārāshṭra. It is interesting to note that these Mahārs will eat horse carrion, which the Gujarāti Ḍheḍs will not.

on a man who eats carrion; indeed he seems to him more a vulture than a human being. It was thus a statesmanlike as well as a sanitary policy that made the older missionary societies working in Gujarāt prohibit their converts from eating carrion.

A great many Ḍheḍs are weavers, and a man working at home on his hand-loom can weave two loin-cloths a day. Other Ḍheḍs are agriculturists. In some country districts they seem to occupy the position that serfs held in feudal times, and are—in common with leather-workers and sweepers—sold with the land. The Ḍheḍs work either on their own fields, or on their masters' in return for their mid-day meal and a fixed daily wage. The farmer can insist besides this on certain well-defined and limited forms of forced labour; for instance, he can make the Ḍheḍ fetch and carry burdens for him, and he can force him to carry the wood he needs for his fire. The farmer can also insist on his bringing the earth with which he plasters his house, but he cannot make the Ḍheḍ plaster it.

If a buffalo or a cow dies, the farmer can call in a leather-worker and a Ḍheḍ to drag the corpse away.[1] The leather-worker and the Ḍheḍ will have to return the skin to the farmer, but will eat the carrion themselves, with the exception of one leg, which is the perquisite of the sweeper. This special portion is called *Feru*, and so clearly is the right to it established, that if the sweeper wants to raise a loan, he can pledge all future dead legs that may accrue to him for so much hard cash.

In return for his forced labour the Ḍheḍ has certain well-understood rights. The farmer must give him food, and specially good food too, at all the great Hindu festivals. When the farmer's son marries, the Ḍheḍ has his full share in the rejoicings, for he joins in the marriage procession to the bride's village, and of course gets fed there. When his patron's daughter is married he does even better, for, without the trouble of a journey, he is feasted for four or five days in his own home.

[1] But if a horse, a donkey, a dog, or a cat die, a man of the Sweeper Caste must be called in to carry them off.

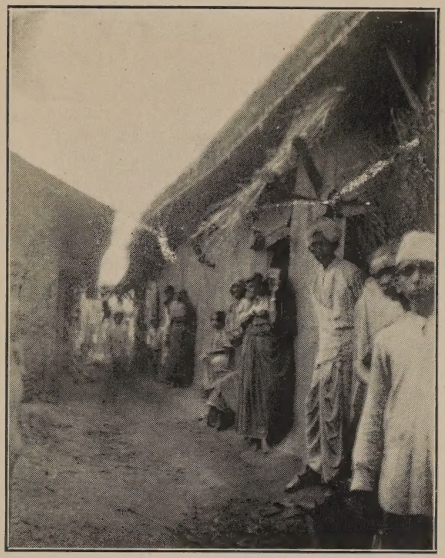
If a Ḍheḍ dies badly off and leaves young children unprovided for, the patron has to bear all the funeral expenses, which will sometimes amount to as much as four hundred rupees, and, however much he spends, he is never allowed to ask for any repayment. In addition, the farmer will have to look after and maintain the children. But although in this way a return is made for forced labour, there is no doubt the custom does lead to much oppression, and any Ḍheḍ refusing to comply with an order is liable to be severely beaten.

The writer will never forget once when, having nursed a Ḍheḍ servant through pneumonic influenza, she sent him home for rest and change. A few days later, to her horror, she saw him, still weak and emaciated, staggering along the road under a heavy burden. He had been impressed for forced labour, and any refusal would have brought trouble, not only on him, but on all his relatives.

On the other hand, there is such solidarity amongst the caste that they can combine for purposes of self-defence against any flagrant over-stepping of the customary exactions. The completeness of caste discipline makes India the easiest land in which to organise and carry out a successful strike.

The writer came across an amusing instance of how such a strike was once defeated. The authorities of a certain temple in Kāṭhiāwār had offended the Ḍheḍs, and so, when one of the cows belonging to the temple-herd died within its precincts, they refused to drag its carcase away, or to allow any other outcaste to do so. 'Now,' they said triumphantly, 'what will you do? If you touch the dead cow yourselves, you will be defiled, and yet you cannot leave it there poisoning the air?' But the lame old head-priest (who had once successfully defied the Imperial Government itself) was a match for them. 'There is not the slightest difficulty,' he replied blandly, 'we will make the cow a god.' So they buried the dead animal where it lay in the temple courtyard, and set up a tiny marble image of a cow over its grave, and to this day its worship is regularly carried on.

Ḍheḍs are liable to another kind of forced labour, besides that which they owe to their farmer patrons. When a



A VILLAGE STREET

A RICH MAN'S HOUSE

Government official goes on tour, the Ḍheḍs of the village at which he camps are called upon to put up his tents, and have to bring in the bundles of grass and wood he requires. But for this forced labour they are now paid in actual cash, and an efficient officer makes a point of seeing that the coins are paid into the hands of the Ḍheḍs themselves when he strikes camp, and not given to minor village officials, who are very prone to 'eat' such coins themselves.

When a Ḍheḍ becomes a Christian, the very fact of his joining another community frees him from the privileges and obligations attached to forced labour. For this reason in many cases the farmer who owned his labour puts every obstacle in the way of his conversion, and often resorts to real cruelty to make him perform his old tasks.

A senior missionary told the writer how, in one village in Gujarāt, a group of new Christians had been brought before their old masters, who had made them bend for hours with bricks on their shoulders, and every time the sufferers straightened themselves and the bricks slipped they were beaten.

New converts are also annoyed in many other ways; they are boycotted, people will not sell them whey, or buy their wood. Other Ḍheḍs, too, regard them as having fallen to the level of sweepers, and will not eat with them, and in every possible way they are subject to pin-pricks. It is remarkable in the face of this how often one hears the fatuous remark, 'Oh, low-castes have nothing to lose and everything to gain by becoming Christians!'

If you ask the Ḍheḍs about themselves, they will tell you that they were originally of Rājput origin, and in proof of this statement will quote the surnames still common among them. They say, however, that during the persecution by Paraśuram, when many high-caste Hindus were put to death, they pretended that they belonged to the despised outcastes, and so escaped with their lives; but as a result of their cowardice they have been reckoned ever since as outcastes.

Few people have more interesting legends about their past and future than the Ḍheḍs. They say that in the earliest cycle of time, the *Ṣatya Yuga*, they were known as the truthful followers of the true *Paṭha*.

In the second cycle they possessed (doubtless as a reward for their virtues) the power of bringing rain, and so were called *Meghavāḷa*. To this day the polite and honorific title to apply to a Ḍheḍ is Meghavāḷa.

In the third cycle of time they were called *Eliyā*, and they have some dim tradition of this term Eliyā being connected with the prophet who brought rain. It is always worth telling the story of Elijah in a Ḍheḍ village, if you want a good introduction.

In the present cycle of time they have sinned by eating carrion, and lowered themselves to becoming Ḍheḍs—a tradition, by the way, which shows how ashamed they themselves are of their carrion habits.

The Ḍheḍs tell a most interesting legend about their name Meghavāḷa. Once upon a time, when all Ḍheḍs were still known as rain-bringers, the rains failed. For three and a half years the heavens were as brass, and not a shower fell to earth. A certain king grew more and more angry as the seasons passed, and at last in desperation he seized upon a particular Ḍheḍ and said to him, 'You are known as Meghavāḷa, why don't you bring rain to my country?' And in a fury he bound his feet in chains. Now this Ḍheḍ was a very holy man and was not in the least dismayed. He called together all his caste to worship, and since he himself was not able on account of his fetters to prepare himself for worshipping by bathing, he asked his fellow Ḍheḍs to pour water over him and to mark his forehead with sacred clay. Then all the caste sang together a famous prayer to the tune known as *Kedāro*—a prayer which is still sung to that same tune by the Ḍheḍs in time of famine—and as they sang, strength came upon the captive, and he bowed his knees together and then snapped the fetters that bound his ankles.

Not only in times of famine, but also in epidemics of cholera or plague, this, the great epic romance of their past history, is still acted by the Ḍheḍs. They call a meeting for sacred song, and a Paṭha is arranged. That is to say, they put a coconut on a low stool covered with a white cloth, and a little lamp in front of it, and then some *bhagat* (holy man) from among the Ḍheḍs stands up and is fettered round the

ankles. The other Ḍheḍs bathe him and mark him with sacred clay. Then he begins to sing the famous prayer to the old tune, and as he sings excitement grows and grows, till at last in a perfect ecstasy he stoops and, whilst all hold their breath with suspense, tries to break the fetters. It is considered a good omen if he succeeds, and my informants have themselves seen that happen several times.

They describe the occurrence in a song that runs:

The rains failed, but the Meghavāḷa did not fail;
Water was scarce.
Ṣatya (the Ḍheḍ) remained in the true Paṭha.
The king broke the fetters;
He (the Ḍheḍ) remained steadfast.

CHAPTER III

BIRTH

The Ḍheḍs are often described as the most religious of all the peoples in Gujarāt. To them religion is not only a caste but an individual concern, and you will find perhaps in the same family that one brother is a member of the Kabīr Panth, another a follower of Swāmi Nārāyan, whilst the father of the household is a Bijmārgi.

But whichever 'Way' they may have personally elected to join, the members of the same family would all follow the same domestic rites. It is as though, with us, all Christians, even though Premillenary, Russellites, or Dowieites, should yet employ the Anglican chaplain to perform their birth, marriage and funeral ceremonies. So it will make for clearness if we begin by studying these domestic rites, on which they are all roughly agreed, before proceeding to discuss the extremely interesting sects to which, as individuals, they attach themselves.

But even here we must work with the greatest caution. The domestic rites of the Ḍheḍs in Kāṭhiāwār differ astoundingly from those in the Charotar district of Gujarāt, and these again from the customs in Aḥmadābād or the Marāṭhi country; so that the student will have to check every statement made in this book by the help of the Ḍheḍs in his own locality.

Again, even in the same neighbourhood the customs differ according to the poverty or wealth of the family described. For instance, a poor man cannot allow his wife the full rest after the birth of her child that a richer family would insist on; and where a horse cannot be provided for the bridegroom to ride on, he will just have to sit astride his unfortunate uncle's hip. But these very differences will

provide the keen student in India with hooks and bait wherewith to furnish his anthropological fishing rod; for there is nothing to which the ordinary man rises quicker than a mis-statement which he knows enough to contradict.

Pre-Natal Precautions

Before the child's birth, the mother is guarded with the greatest care from everything which might injuriously affect the child or render her own case harder. It will suffice here to mention a few typical examples, for the student will easily gather more for himself.

An expectant mother must never look at a European; for then, instead of the beautiful eyes common to all Indians, her child might be born with ugly English eyes!

If the mother is so ill-advised as to look at a broom, the child will be born and remain in a state of dire poverty all its life, unless indeed a man of the sweeper caste happens to be holding the broom on his shoulder, for that is considered lucky.

If a horse is tethered with heel ropes, the mother must be careful not to step over those ropes, or the child will only be born with the greatest difficulty.

Of course the mother must not look at anything as ill-omened as a corpse, or the child will be born dead.

During an eclipse of either the sun or the moon, the mother must stay in the house, otherwise the baby might be born either half-mad, blind, or disfigured.

Another thing to be very careful about is a snake. If the expectant mother sees one, it will have an evil effect on both the baby and the snake, for all its life long the child will have an irritating habit of hanging its tongue out, whilst the snake, once it is looked on by a pregnant woman, will go blind and circle round the house unceasingly for three whole days, to the great peril and inconvenience of the family.

The Agharaṇi Ceremony

Certain Ḍheḍs—but by no means all—perform a pre-natal ceremony (*agharaṇi*). This ceremony, which seems only to be performed in the case of the first pregnancy, takes

place on some lucky day, during the seventh month. It is not held in the young wife's home, but in that of her father-in-law.

The father-in-law, accompanied by a friend and the expectant young mother herself, go to the girl's old home, where they are received with great pleasure, welcomed warmly and fed deliciously, and all the girl's near relatives are called in to rejoice with her. The young husband's father tells the wife's father the joyful news (which of course he has already guessed), and that his daughter's agharaṇi is to be held, and names the lucky day which the boy's priest (*garuḍa*) has fixed on—this day is probably not a Saturday or a Tuesday. The girl's father thereupon gives her father-in-law a sheet and also two rupees, and the girl, her father-in-law and his friend all go back to the 'in-laws' house.

When the day appointed for the ceremony arrives, the young wife's brother, if he is young enough not to be able to grow a moustache, (or if she has no unmoustached brother, her sister, but not her father or mother) go to the 'in-law' house accompanied by the girl's priest. They generally, in Gujarāt, arrange to go in the evening, in order that an *occhava* (religious sing-song) may be held. An occhava is *par excellence* the religious dissipation of a Gujarāt Ḍheḍ; he seems much keener on it than his brother in Kāṭhiāwār.

An occhava is arranged for in the following way: Two cross-pieces of wood are tied together, and garlands are suspended from the centre of the cross and from each end of the wood. It is interesting to notice that these garlands should be made of garden flowers, not of wild ones. Under the wooden cross (*maṇḍavāḍi*) is placed a stool (*bajaḍha*, or *paṭha*) covered with a white cloth. On this they arrange two little saucer-lamps filled with melted butter. One of the two has four tiny pieces of cotton to serve as four wicks, and it is placed in the centre of the stool on the top of one-and-a-quarter pounds of rice; the other little lamp has only one piece of cotton wick, and it is put at the corner of the stool. The central lamp (*jyota*) is regarded as divine. It is never blown out by the breath, but, in common with

all lamps in Ḍheḍ houses, is slapped out by the hand, or flapped out with the corner of the *sāri*. (There is a special word for this ceremonial extinction, the usual expression not being used.)

The rim of this central saucer-lamp is marked with five dots of red powder (*kanku*), and in front of it a coconut is placed, also marked with the five red dots. The Ḍheḍs say that these five dots are in honour of the Five Elements: Earth, Water, Light, Wind and Heaven. At the close of the occhava this coconut will be broken and distributed as 'offered food' (*shesha*).

The stool at every occhava is arranged like this, except for a special occhava held in the month of Śrāvaṇa. This occhava is called *Narasimha Occhava*, because it was first performed by Narasiṁha Mehta in Junāgaḍh, Kāṭhiāwār; and for it no coconut is put on the stool, but instead bread made of mingled rice, millet, wheat, barley and vetch. This bread is waved five times round the central lamp, and then given to the leader of the occhava as *naivedya*. When the stool is arranged, a man who can sing well is chosen as leader (*occhavivo*) of the occhava; he is probably a specially devout layman (*bhagat*). The leader sings, and the others all repeat after him one of the Ḍheḍ happy songs, very likely their favourite of all that tells of their coming king (*Kāyam Rāi*).

All this time the expectant mother and her husband have very wisely been asleep, but about four o'clock in the morning they get up, bathe, and come into the sing-song wearing new clothes. These clothes are part of the very expensive presents which the girl's father has to make on the occasion of his daughter's first pregnancy.

The poor man has to give the girl herself bracelets, necklace, anklets, ear-rings, as well as a silk camisole, and a red skirt with gold spots. He has to give the young husband a ring or ear-rings, or even a necklace, which the youth wears now as he comes into the sing-song. But this does not exhaust the claims on the girl's father, for later on he will have to send his daughter's mother-in-law a red or green skirt and her father-in-law a sheet and two rupees.

When at the time of her marriage he sold his daughter,

he may have received sixty or a hundred rupees from her 'in-laws' as bride-price; but if he is a rich man, these 'pregnancy presents' will cost him perhaps two hundred rupees; while if he is very poor he may get off by spending only fifty rupees on presents. He must also give a coconut, a pound-and-a-quarter of rice, and a pound-and-a-quarter of betel nut.

In front of the stool a drawing in flour is made, that rather resembles a grill, and has nine divisions representing the nine planets. In the central division of the grill are placed a piece of smoking cow-dung, and some aromatic herbs, and over these melted butter is poured during the ceremony.

We have seen that many of the Ḍheḍs are weavers, and this is symbolically shown now, for in front of the grill and facing the stool a special piece of wood is arranged for the young husband and his wife to sit on. This is the piece of wood on which the hand-woven cloth is wrapped when it is completed and ready for sale.

When the expectant mother and the father are seated on this, the priest or 'domestic chaplain' belonging to the husband's house comes forward.

Meanwhile, another 'domestic chaplain' holding office in the young wife's house, will have accompanied her brother to her husband's house: but he takes no lead in the first part of the ceremony, which is performed by the husband's hereditary priest.

This priest now ties the corner of the young husband's scarf of ceremony to the corner of his wife's shawl-like overdress or sāri, and then, repeating the appropriate sacred verses (*mantra*), he pours melted butter on to the smouldering cow-dung cake in the centre of the grill. After this, whilst the women present sing auspicious songs, the priest binds a *miṇḍhaḷ* fruit to the right wrist of the wife, and another to the right wrist of the husband, then marks the forehead of both with the auspicious red dot and, finally, unties the knot which has united the young couple. But before he unties it he asks the young mother whose child she is carrying, and she mentions her husband's name, and in the same way the husband mentions his wife's name.

Now the girl's priest steps forward, and presents the two

rupees and the sheet to her father-in-law, and the skirt to her mother-in-law. Then, turning to the young wife, he fills the corner of her sāri with a pound-and-a-quarter of rice, a pound-and-a-quarter of betel nut, a packet of red powder and a coconut. Whereupon the girl gets up and goes out with the corner of her shawl bulging auspiciously; her sister-in-law follows her, and they go to the house of every near and friendly neighbour, where a pretty rite is performed. The expectant mother throws a few grains of rice over the house, the woman who lives there comes out, the expectant mother waves the corner of her bulging sāri, and in return the woman of the house blesses her.

If there is time, the young wife should go to her father's house, stay there for a few days, and then go back to her husband for a short time; but in any case, she will, if possible, again return to her own old home for the child's birth.

This Seventh Month Ceremony varies considerably in different districts; sometimes the expectant mother's hair is parted by a sister-in-law, and a young boy is seated on her lap. The all-important sister-in-law fills the corner of the young wife's sāri five times over with tiny packets from a winnowing fan. In the five packets are sugar, gum, dates, ginger, spices. These packets are kept most carefully till the expected baby is born, and then the mother eats their contents. The greatest care is exercised that not one particle be dropped from one of the packages whilst the corner of the sāri is being filled, otherwise misfortune would be prophesied.

When the young wife stands up to have her sāri filled, she is measured with a five-coloured strand of cotton, and on this a miṇḍhaḷ fruit is threaded and tied round her wrist. Then her own mother gives her a green silk sāri, a green bodice and a green skirt, and all these green things have gay red patterns stamped over them.

Next the expectant mother's sāri is tied to an end of her young husband's turban, and thus united they go to the girl's old home. There they take their seats on a mattress, and opposite to them a pestle is arranged. A Brāhman arranges a small tray by the pestle and puts on it a coconut,

a lighted lamp, fed with melted butter, some betel nut, red turmeric, and a small image of Ganesha. This image the Brāhman brings with him, and he charges five pice (about a penny farthing) for its hire. The Brāhman then reads some verses from a sacred book, and demands a rupee-and-a quarter and a coconut, as part of his fee.

When the expectant mother walked to her old home, each of her relatives that were present waved some small coin, either a pice or an anna, round her head, and these coins are now given to the Brāhman.

In some places the young wife stays in her old home from the seventh month ceremony until the birth of the child, and during this time she is not allowed, unless the family is bitterly poor, to grind or to fill the household waterpots, or to do any very hard or exhausting work. In especial she is forbidden to sew on Sundays or Tuesdays, lest she sew up the ears of the expected baby.

She simply has 'the time of her life'; for not only may she not drudge, but all her wishes must be granted, lest the refusal should injure the greatly desired child. For instance, if she asks for fruit and it is not given to her, all his life her baby will have a horrible habit of spitting. (A good many expectant mothers seem to have been refused fruit in India, to judge from their offspring's habits!)

Every action is turned into an omen; for instance, if, as the young wife walks, her little toe does not touch the ground, then the new baby will be the bringer of bad luck, and either its mother will soon be a widow, or its father a widower.

And now to return to Gujarāt; we saw that there the custom was for the expectant mother to go to her old home for a few days, and then to go back to her mother-in-law's house for a short time, before the final return to her own mother's house for the birth of the child.

On this final return omens are very carefully observed, and if on the road she meets a sweeper, a widow, a cat, a man who sneezes, a dog who shakes his head (unless some man has the presence of mind to avert danger by spitting instantly) or a donkey that brays, then the young mother promptly sits down in the dust till the bad omen has passed

by. They notice specially on her arrival which foot is foremost, for if she steps over the threshold with her right foot a boy will be born, if with her left it will only be a girl.

The expectant mother does not have quite such a lazy time in some other places, where they seem to think that a little bit of work will not do her any harm, but even there they prevent her cleaning her own finger nails, lest the child should be born before its time.

The Birth Itself

The midwife who is called in to attend on the expectant mother may be a Ḍheḍ herself, or a Muhammadan. When the time has come she and the girl's own mother take the young wife into the birth chamber. In very poor houses this is just a corner of the living room curtained off; richer folk set apart a tiny room. The midwife starts her work by tying four black threads round the four corners of the bed[1] to keep off the evil eye, then she either bathes the expectant mother with warm water, or rubs her with oil. In some places they give her milk to drink, and if the child is born whilst she is actually drinking the milk they think it will be very wise. Some people give the young wife black pepper and ginger melted in hot water.

Of course everything the patient wears is loosened, her hair unbound and free, buttons undone, lest anything should impede the birth; but if, in spite of this, delay occurs, they may use medicinal remedies, such as making a ball of cobwebs mixed with treacle, and inserting it in the mouth of the womb. Perhaps they implore aid from a mother goddess, choosing the goddess who is specially worshipped in that family. In this case they wave a vessel round the head of the patient, and promise that if the child is born quickly they will present that particular vessel to the goddess. But probably they instantly think of evil spirits (for fear is always very near them) and try to appease them. A favourite method of propitiation is to offer the value of a silver necklace. A necklace is waved seven times round the expectant mother's head, she then touches it and promises to

[1] In many places a bedstead is not used.

give its price to the evil spirit which is tormenting her, if only it will allow her child to be born. The vow is fulfilled after the child's birth by placing one-and-a-quarter-rupees' worth of *śīro* (a favourite dish of evil spirits) at their favourite haunt, the centre of the nearest cross roads. Most Ḍheḍs would make the mother sit over the smoke of some burning cow-dung cakes; but the custom differs, whether the actual birth of the child takes place on the floor of the house, or in a bedstead. In some places the mother is forced to sleep on the floor for twelve days after the child's birth, in order to show honour to the goddess Mother Sixth (*Chaṭhī*). The future peace of the house for many a long day will depend on whether the child is born at night-time or in the day. If it is born in sunlit hours it will undoubtedly cry every night, whereas if it be born during the hours of darkness it will cry by day, but allow its exhausted relatives to slumber peacefully at night.

The announcement of birth is always interesting. If a girl is born the relatives give out the news by beating a winnowing fan—cynical folk say that is to show how great an expense will be incurred. But when a boy is born the midwife seizes some brass plate on which the people of the house eat their food, and beats that, with the double object of making a joyful noise, and also to show that some one has come who later on will feed his mother!

Great importance is attached to the umbilical cord. The midwife cuts the cord with an ordinary knife a hand's breadth from the baby, and she ties the end of it very carefully with the piece of cord the mother had previously used to tie her hair. If it was not most carefully tied, wind would get into the child's stomach and it would swell.

When the cord shrivels up it is generally buried outside the house under a great stone, but in some districts it is buried together with a tiny coin and a *sopāri* nut in the birth chamber itself, on the exact spot where the leg of the bed stood. In any case they take every precaution, for if an evilly disposed woman was to get it and eat it, the baby to whom it appertained would die, but the wicked woman's own child would live. If it was buried carelessly and either

a dog or a cat dug it up and ate it, the poor mother would suffer dreadfully.

Dheḍs think it very unlucky for a child to be born in a *chawl* (tenement-house). 'You came fettered and you will be fettered all your life in everything you try and do,' they say to the unfortunate infant.

Precautions after the Birth

We saw that before the child was born the mother sat over the smoke of cow-dung cakes. In some parts of Kāṭhiāwār the ashes of these cakes are guarded very carefully; a fire of dried cowdung is kept burning in the birth chamber for six days, but new cakes are just put on the top of the old ones, and the ashes are not disturbed, not only for the six days whilst the fire is burning, but also for six days after it has been allowed to go out. In other districts, however, no attention at all seems to be paid to these ashes.

In some places as soon as the child is born a tiny saucer lamp of melted butter is lighted, and tied to the mother's waist to guard her from pain.

The mother is generally not allowed to drink milk for some time after the child's birth, and in some villages she is forbidden to touch it or sugar for five weeks (in others, for ten days), lest she should turn pale and her face swell. She may be allowed to drink a beverage compounded of ginger, melted butter, treacle and fennel seeds, or, if they are afraid of fever, she is only allowed *rāba*.

The mother does not usually nurse the child for three days; instead it is given *gaḷathuthī*.

In some districts the mother and child are washed in warm water on the day of birth, and sometimes the child is waved over a fire in which fennel seeds are burning, before it is put snugly into a hammock, with a tiny fire burning beneath it.

The mother will not usually go out of the house in daylight for at least six days, but if she is obliged to go out, she goes by night, with a woman holding a piece of iron against her hip, that an evil spirit may not torment her.

In fact, all these first days they have to be on their guard against evil of every kind. Suppose some stranger climbs

on to the roof and rattles the tiles, whatever curiosity this odd conduct may excite in the denizens of the house must be exiguously stifled. No one must ask, 'Who is there?' or the young mother will infallibly get ill. Again, if some one comes and urgently demands some live embers from the house, the request must not be granted, however cogent a reason be given; for if an enemy were to obtain fire from a house within five—or, as some believe, twelve—days of a birth, pour water over it and then drink that water, the newly-born infant would die, and the enemy's child would live. Or, if some evil-disposed woman with a delicate child manages to steal, unperceived, a needle from the house, and warming it in her own fire goes back again and contrives to prick the new baby with it, then that infant will die, but her own will gain strength and flourish.

In fact, the superstitions about a newly-born baby and her mother are endless, and all testify in the most pathetic way to the fragile hold that the immature fruit of an immature girl has on life, to the dangers that beset an Indian accouchement, and perhaps most of all to the fierce desire to save the life of one's own child, even at the cost of another baby's death.

The Sixth Day

It has been stated that Ḍheḍs do not usually observe the Sixth Day Ceremony,[1] Chaṭhī; and so it is worth-while describing the ceremony in full. In the case of both boys and girls it is observed on the sixth day after the birth, for then every Hindu believes that Vidhātrī, the goddess of fate, is coming by night to write out the child's future.

In preparation for this great event the mother must stay in bed and not speak all the day and night, but must content herself with making signs to show what she wants. Under the mother's bed are arranged seven *pīpal* leaves, each marked with five lucky dots, and having on them a little rice, together with a tiny copper coin, an ink-pot with red ink or red powder, and a pen. Some Ḍheḍs believe that the

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. lx, p. 342.

goddess of fate will come in the form of a cat—but evidently a learned cat—that can handle a pen, and write out a career.

On this day, too, the mother is fed with seven different sorts of vegetables, and seven kinds of grain, and it is a bother collecting all these fourteen differing samples, but the earnest relatives feel well repaid when they remember that whatever the mother tastes that day will, all his life long, agree with the child, for nothing that the mother has sampled on the Sixth Day can ever upset him.

Randalā Mātā. In some districts the mother is allowed to worship for the first time after the child's birth on this Sixth Day. A coconut is placed on a brass water vessel and named Randalā Mātā. Five pieces of sopāri are offered to her, also a tiny portion saved from the first food the mother ate after the child's birth. Then five different kinds of sweetmeats are put in front of this mother goddess, and a little of each kind given to the child's mother, and the rest distributed amongst the neighbouring children. Sometimes a little silver medal is brought from the goldsmith's, offered to Randalā Mātā and afterwards tied to the baby's throat.

Up till now the new baby has been kept in darkness, but now a little lamp, or a saucer made of flour, is filled with clarified butter and placed by the goddess; the child is put beside it, and the mother worships the goddess.

In some localities the child has been kept naked, just wrapped in a shawl till this day arrives, but now it is clothed in a little coat. In fact so great a day is the sixth in the baby's life that it may even touch the heart of the money-lender, to whom the family is in debt, so far as to make him give the cloth for the little coat; but in districts where money-lenders are hard-hearted the father's sister gives this.

The father may be allowed to see his child on this Sixth Day, when it can now for the first time be brought out of the house; but in some villages he may have to wait till the twelfth day.

The Seventh Day

In certain towns the mother gets up on the seventh day

after the child's birth, bathes, puts on fresh clothes, the bed is turned out of the room, and her neighbours come to see her. The seven leaves, the copper coin, and pen and red ink used for the Sixth Day Ceremony are put on the wall shrine together with seven kinds of grain.

Sometimes the amusing ceremony of 'kicking' is performed this day. Some woman-relative arranges two brass water vessels outside the house just under the eaves. The young mother bearing the child in her arms comes out of the house walking backwards, and she continues her backward march till she reaches the vessels, and then she has to try and kick them over. If the new baby be a girl, the mother kicks with her left foot, if a boy, with her right, but in any case she must kick violently, for by the strength of her kicking power people will guess how she has been fed during her confinement, and if she makes but a poor effort they will tease the proud grandmother unmercifully, and in spite of her laughing protests declare that she starved the poor thing! In any case they will not let the event pass without making it, you may warrant, an excuse for a great deal of innocent jollity, for is not the birth chamber, with all its fears, a thing of the past?

But still the mother is not ceremonially pure; she must not touch anyone's water vessel but her own, and must not cook, grind, or fill water from the well—a merciful provision which ensures rest for the patient.[1]

On the Seventh[2] Day too, the midwife is paid her fee; very poor people give her four annas if the baby is a girl, and eight if it is a boy, but ordinary folk would be expected

[1] In other places the mother does not get up for twelve days; then the ashes which have been kept under the bed are placed in a hole, and the mother sits over these to bathe. When she dresses she puts on exactly the same clothes that she wore for the Agharani which is also known as the *Sīmanta* (Hair-Parting) Ceremony. Female relatives come and present clothes to the child, and in return are given a mixture of boiled wheat and grain, and some sweetmeats are provided at the proud grandmother's expense. If the father has not seen the child, he is permitted to do so now, after the women callers have gone. As a matter of fact the father generally contrives to see the precious baby far earlier in its career.

[2] In very poor houses, for lack of service she may have to do work after seven days.

to give a rupee, or a rupee-and-a-quarter and a sāri, whilst rich Ḍheḍs pay five.

Every day the midwife has been given something, so that she has always gone home with the corner of her shawl bulging auspiciously with grain, but now she gets more grain than usual, in addition to other delights, such as melted butter, country sugar and, perhaps, cooked rice.

Water Worship

After a month and a quarter the young mother is considered ritually pure. On some auspicious day she goes to the little wall shrine and takes from it the seven pīpal leaves and the seven kinds of grain that she put there after the worship on the sixth day, and goes to the particular well or water-pipe which the Ḍheḍs—poor souls!—are allowed to use. Some women and the Ḍheḍ Brāhman accompany her, and at the well she arranges the seven leaves round it and the seven different kinds of rice, and marks them with *kanku*. She then throws rice over them and leaves them there. In other places she puts a broken coconut and a sopāri nut, and a *paisa* in front of the well, and then picking it up distributes pieces of the coconut to the children, who, trust them, have been on the outlook for so pleasing a ceremony.

Hair-Cutting

The next event in the little baby's life history is the cutting of its hair. This cannot take place until he is at least one-and-a-quarter months' old, and may be delayed much longer. Some Ḍheḍs for instance like to perform the ceremony at the Daserā Festival. Suppose two brothers happen to have two sons born to their wives about the same time, they will both wait till Daserā to perform the ceremony together.

If the families worship the Mother Goddess, Khoḍiār, they will get a man liable to spirit-possession to offer two white lambs to the goddess at this time. Amongst Ḍheḍs it is not difficult to find such a man; there is one in nearly every family. To her astonishment the writer discovered, whilst writing these notes, that a young butler she had

once had was one of these men, liable to possession. He came to her from the entourage of a former Governor of Bombay, but she was told that the goddess spirit never took possession of him when His Excellency was giving a very big dinner! Once, however, when the writer was present, at the time fixed for the hair-cutting of the two children, the man was set down opposite a fire. He drank a little spirits, and a little was poured on to the fire. Then the goddess entered into him, and he began to shake a little, and seized the two lambs. These had previously been washed, and now the whole company waited for them to shake too, as a sign that the goddess had accepted them. They never have to wait long, for the writer was candidly assured by her friends with fits of laughter: 'If they don't shake, we just pour cold water on them till they do, for if not, we should have to go to the trouble and expense of buying new ones!' So the hydropathic method is adopted as quicker and cheaper. As soon as the poor little lambs shake, the exorcist cuts both their throats and sprinkles a little of the blood over a picture of the goddess, and then himself drinks some of the blood. This done, he cuts a little of the child's hair and the hair is thrown into the river. The next morning a barber is called who cuts all the hair off the child's head, not even leaving the special lock *chotle*. The whole caste then eats the lambs. If the family worships the Mother Goddess Kālikā, instead of two lambs, a black male goat is offered. In the case that came under the writer's notice, the grandfather acted as exorcist, and the same ceremony was gone through. In no case can a female animal be offered.

But the hair-cutting may be delayed a long time; for instance, if a son has died, the anxious parents sometimes will not allow the new child's hair to be cut until he is five years old. As a special precaution they may take him to the shrine of the goddess Ambā on the Mount Ārāsur. There the temple attendant will perform the ceremony, cutting all the hair, save one special lock at the base of the skull; this is known as the Ambā lock, or the Bādhā lock, and is worn as a sign that the boy is under the special protection of the benign goddess Ambā.

Another well-known method of preservation is to give the boy some name such as 'Dung,' or 'Rubbish,' in order to pretend—a pathetic camouflage—that he is not precious enough to be worthy of the attention of any malign or jealous power. They may even go so far, if it is the only surviving son, as to pretend he is a girl, by piercing a hole in the left nostril; for an evil power, though it might be jealous of a boy, would surely spare a mere girl!

CHAPTER IV

ILLNESS

Now in our life-story of a Ḍheḍ we must see what remedies are resorted to if the child falls ill; and perhaps nothing will make us realise more the fear that encompasses these people, their dread of evil malign powers, who may be provoked by any show of love, any prosperity, nay even by having for once enough to eat.

The Evil Eye

The Evil Eye is the thing of all others that Ḍheḍs most dread, and the worst is that it can function automatically without any conscious desire to do evil. If, for instance, a poor man sees other people eating rich food, and simply thinks to himself, 'What nice food!' without any evil intention on his part, that food may become poison to every child and man who eats it. The only safeguard is to give some food to any stranger who sees you eating, or, better still, to eat in private.

If a mother laughs whilst nursing her child, or just looks down on it with a warmth of responsive tenderness and love at feeling its hands on the gracious circle of her breast, the child may fall ill from the Evil Eye. That is why it is only wise always to cover the head of your baby with your shawl when you are nursing it.

From the very earliest days Ḍheḍs fear the Evil Eye. If the baby cries a great deal they wave salt round its head seven times, and then throw the salt on the fire; if the salt goes '*tar, tar, tar!*' and makes a great deal of noise, it shows the crying is owing to the influence of the Evil Eye. To counteract it, the child's suffering relatives take some of the tiny red and black seeds (*chaṇoṭhī*) used by jewellers,

and put them in a little pot, together with some ashes, some water, and some pepper, and on the top of the pot they place a tiny earthen vessel like a small sugar basin,[1] and take it to a place where four roads meet. There they choose the exact centre of the cross roads, deposit the vessel with its tiny basin on top, and make a circle round it with water, and go home with never a backward look. They explain that they choose the centre of the four roads in order that the malign influence may find it easy to return to its place of origin, whether it lie north, south, east, or west.

So full of evil is the covered vessel that no one will touch it. Even a carter will make a wide circle, lest one of the wheels of his cart should crush it and release the black power imprisoned therein.

The best way to avoid the Evil Eye is not to take too small a baby out of doors; but if an Indian mother has to do so, she is careful to mark its right temple with lamp-black, and to put some on its eyelashes. Or you may go to the bazaar, and buy charms, probably bronze squares, triangles, swastika, or circles, and tie them round the child's throat.

Some people unfortunately have the Evil Eye, and if one of these ill-omened bringers of ill-luck has to be invited to a house, his apprehensive hosts put a lemon and a needle in their turbans, tie peacocks' feathers round their own and their children's arms, and further mark the children with a black smudge under their left foot, and behind their right ear. They make this black smear with lamp black. The most efficacious lamp-black to use against the Evil Eye is that made on the Witches' Night, *Kālī Chaturdaśī*. On that hideous night careful people light a little saucer of melted butter, and hold another saucer above it; the black that thus collects is treasured the whole year through, as the specific against the Evil Eye. As a matter of fact it also serves another purpose, for by examining the manner in

[1] This basin is called a *rāmpātra*, and is only used by the very, very poor, who cannot afford a metal vessel. There is a proverb, 'So poor that there is not even a rāmpātra in the house.'

which the black has accrued to the saucer the sex of an expected child can be diagnosed. If the black resembles a half-hearth, a daughter will be born into the family; but if by any, even the most terrific, exercise of the imagination the shape of a hill can be made out, everyone rejoices in the prospect of a boy.

But supposing, despite all their precautions, the child has been 'overlooked'—if, for instance, it has gone out wearing rich clothes, and someone with or without any evil intent has said either to themselves or aloud, 'What a beautiful child!' evil is sure to befall it—then what is the parent to do? There are many remedies, but one of the surest is to tie a special necklace called *nazariyūm* round the child's neck. This necklace is composed of little pieces of chopped owl's leg interspersed with black wooden beads, threaded on to a string.

But suppose they are not sure of the cause of the child's illness, and only suspect that it has been 'overlooked'? Then the mother must go to the potter's and get a little earthen lid-like vessel and put in it pepper, a piece of black cloth, and some ashes, all of which she sprinkles with water. She then fixes another earthen vessel over this, binds them together with ashes and water, and places them carefully outside the house in some unfrequented place. Next morning she inspects them. If the vessels have separated, there was some other reason for the child's sickness, but if the two are still stuck firmly together it shows that her suspicion was right, and that the Evil Eye had caused the illness; but now that the Evil Eye has this combined vessel with its black contents to rest on, the child will soon get well.

The Evil Shadow

It is not generally known that, besides the Evil Eye, Hindus are also very much afraid of an Evil Shadow (*Paḍachāyā*). Any woman, however benign her usual influence, at certain periods is impure, and at these times her shadow may do harm to any child or beast on which it falls.

For instance, if a child gets sore eyes, his parents will at once become anxious about his future, for if, whilst his eyes were bad, a woman were to cast a bad shadow over him, a

white speck would form on the eye and the child would become blind. To prevent this happening, they tie peacocks' feathers round his arm, for these will serve a double purpose, warding off both the Evil Shadow and the Evil Eye. If, however, the white speck, or 'flower' as they call it, does appear, the parents will go to a silversmith and get him to make a silver flower for them. This flower they offer to the Mother Goddess Fulbāi, called 'Sister Flower.'

When a child is suffering from small-pox it seems peculiarly liable to the influence of an Evil Shadow, and to guard against this no outsider is allowed to enter the house on any pretext whatever whilst the illness lasts. If an Evil Shadow fell on the child there is no knowing what might happen; the child might lose its sight, its hearing, or the use of its hands.

It is very interesting to notice the behaviour of the mother at this time. In some districts as soon as she is sure that the child has contracted smallpox, she takes off her own little camisole and makes a vow to Uncle Smallpox (*Baḷiyā Kākā*). Until that vow is fulfilled neither she nor any other member of the house bathes, oils their hair, or makes the auspicious mark on their forehead.

The usual remedy employed is to smear sweet oil over the child, and when the illness has abated and all the smallpox has dried up the friends make a pilgrimage to the nearest shrine of Baḷiyā Kākā, which is probably found under a tree.

On the way thither the mother does not wear her camisole but places it across her shoulder. On her head she carries a broken earthen vessel full of smoking cow or buffalo dung (not dung welded into cakes, but just lighted as it is picked up from the ground), and she has to walk carefully, for, whilst balancing this on her head, her hands have to be kept behind her back. Arrived at the shrine, she prostrates herself, and then rolls over and over in the dust seven times, saying, 'I thank you, Baḷiyā Kākā, that you have done my child no harm,' and also rubs her camisole in the dust seven times. She has brought with her five little millet loaves from the house, and also five fist-shaped handfuls of flour. She now proceeds to place one loaf and

one handful of flour in front of the shrine, and then to distribute the remainder to any children who may be present, after which she is free to go home, bathe, and wear her camisole, the house is free to visitors, and all is well.

Before leaving the subject of Evil Shadow we may notice that any milk-giving animal is specially liable to its influence. If, when a man is milking, the Evil Shadow fall on him, he will not use the milk himself, but either throw it away or dispose of it to the unsuspecting. Such animals too, are very susceptible to the effect of the Evil Eye, and if, when a cow or buffalo is milked, it gives milk mingled with blood, they know someone has 'overlooked' it.

Evil Spirits

But besides the effect of the Evil Eye and the Evil Shadow, there is also the influence of an Evil Spirit to fear. Suppose a child is in the habit of suddenly screaming and jumping, his parents believe that he is being frightened by an Evil Spirit. To remedy this sad state of affairs they take a little black earthen vessel and put it in the fire till it is red, then they wave it seven times round the child, and put it upside down in a bigger earthen vessel. They wave a vessel of water seven times round the child, and sprinkle water from this on to the tiny heated vessel. The water sizzles on the hot surface, (or as they say, goes '*chum, chum, chum!*') and as it screams the child is gradually freed from the evil spirit; so they keep on sprinkling water and moving the little vessel about inside the big one, with tongs, in order that it may continue to scream 'chum, chum, chum!' as long as possible. The louder it screams 'chum!' the worse it shows the influence of the evil spirit to have been and of course the longer it continues to scream the more completely the child is freed from that influence.

Evil Spells

Again the child may have fallen ill owing to some jealous neighbour having put a spell on it. To ascertain whether this is the case or not, the anxious parents call in an exorcist. He takes a handful of uncooked wheat grains from the household store, and announces beforehand, 'I am

going to count these; if they prove to be even it is an ordinary illness; if uneven, it is the work of a spell.'

If, on counting, he finds that a spell has been laid on the child, he proceeds to remove it, perhaps in the following way. He orders the mother to make the favourite festal wheaten dish of śīro, and put this, together with seven betel nuts, a string of woven cotton of various coloured threads, and seven limes, on a piece of broken earthenware. He himself sucks two of the seven limes, and then takes a tile from the roof and puts some smoking embers from the family fire on it. With the broken vessel containing the śīro in one hand, and the smoking tile in the other, he makes for the nearest cross roads, and deposits the two in the centre of the crossing. He then draws a circle of water round them, and after scattering incense on the embers, departs leaving the 'pudding' to its fate.

A young Indian missionary once told the writer a thrilling story of how he once found himself, hungry and tired, out in the country miles from his home, when he came across a Spell-Pudding and ate it with the keenest relish. Others were frightened at his audacity, but he was not a penny the worse.

Illness also gives occasion for the third 'note' in a Ḍheḍ's religion—his love of going on pilgrimage, and having a religious picnic.

The Mother Goddess

The child may be ill owing to the influence of some mother goddess. For instance, if the arm or leg of a child is paralysed, all his friends know at once that the shadow of the 'chariot' of some mother goddess has fallen on him. To remedy it his parents get a carpenter to make a little model cart with a red cover. They take this into their house and put on it a little saucer containing some glowing embers from the family hearth. For a moment the little invalid rests his paralysed leg or arm on the cart, and then his parents pick him up and wave him seven times round the cart. This done, they all set out for what Indians love—a religious picnic. Whatever mother goddess, Ambā, Kāḷikā, or Becharāji, they suspect of having caused the injury, must

be appeased, but it is no good going just to an insignificant shrine of that deity, they must go to some important temple. So off they start, the merriest party. If the child is small, someone carries him, and another friend pulls the cart still containing embers. However distant the temple they have selected may be, no one may journey there in a carriage or a cart, though they are free to go by train. Arrived at the temple, the cart is placed in position before the shrine, and the parents pray, 'O mother goddess, if you have caused this paralysis, be mercifully pleased to remove it!'

Various Remedies for Illness

If a tiny baby be taken ill, Ḍheḍs often resort to maternal remedies, for the connection with the mother is still very close. For instance, if a baby gets sore eyes they wash them in the mother's milk.

As the child grows older they turn more to 'zoological' remedies, of which a most interesting list might be compiled for himself by any observer. Here we must quote only a few.

If a child contracts whooping cough, any careful mother ties a squirrel's tail round the child's throat, or if she can catch a crow she will cook its liver, and give it to the child to eat. Another remedy for this trying disease is to kill a bat, and catch its blood on some wool. This wool is then soaked in water, and when the paroxysm of coughing comes on the child is given the reddened fluid to drink. The blood of a hare is equally efficacious, but this is more suitable for a younger patient, since it is given mixed with the mother's milk. The smell of a camel often gives relief from whooping cough. If a child is old enough to stand, it is sometimes taken to a kneeling camel, given its tail to hold, and told to smell the base of the tail three or four times. In some places the parents vow that if their child recovers from whooping cough, they will offer toy horses at the tomb of a particular Muhammadan saint. As soon as the child is convalescent the grateful parents tie tiny white horses, fashioned from cloth, on the trees above the grave.

But zoological remedies are resorted to not only in cases of whooping cough. If a child is deaf, its parents take a

peacock's foot, boil it in sweet oil, and when the oil is cold drop some of it into the child's ear.

For rheumatism a favourite cure is to rub the patient with the fat of a fox. There is only one thing better, and that is the fat of a tiger, which is very difficult to obtain.

If a child suffers from night blindness, goat's liver should be given it to eat, and should also be rubbed on the child's eyes.

Another favourite set of remedies is concerned with the application of heat. If a child suffers from convulsions, the parents heat a needle on cakes of burning dung, and apply it to the back of the child's neck. In the case of persistent headaches they often put a heated needle above the child's eyebrow. When a nursing mother eats something that gives the child bad indigestion, so bad that its little stomach is all swollen out, they put a red-hot needle on it. In fact so often is a heated needle applied to children that most of them are scarred somewhere or other from its effects.

But in all illnesses the parents fear chiefly the influence of the Evil Eye, and often you will see a black thread tied round a child's arm to avert it. A favourite way of getting this thread is to beg it from a Muhammadan *faqir* on some special Tuesday or Sunday.

In studying the remedies used when children are ill, we must not only remember how easily illness is contracted in the unhealthy sanitary conditions surrounding a Dhed hamlet, and how swiftly a little life peters out under a burning Indian sky, but also how difficult it is for a low-caste to obtain scientific aid. Only too often, the doctor paid by Government to help the villagers will decline to contract the ceremonial defilement which would accrue to him from a visit of mercy to a low-caste quarter. If he has thus saved a child's life, he cannot go and worship in his temple till he is purified by ceremonial washings ; whereas, if he has refused to go, and so callously let a little child die in agony, he is in a fit state to offer praises to his god!

CHAPTER V

INITIATION CEREMONIES

The Guru

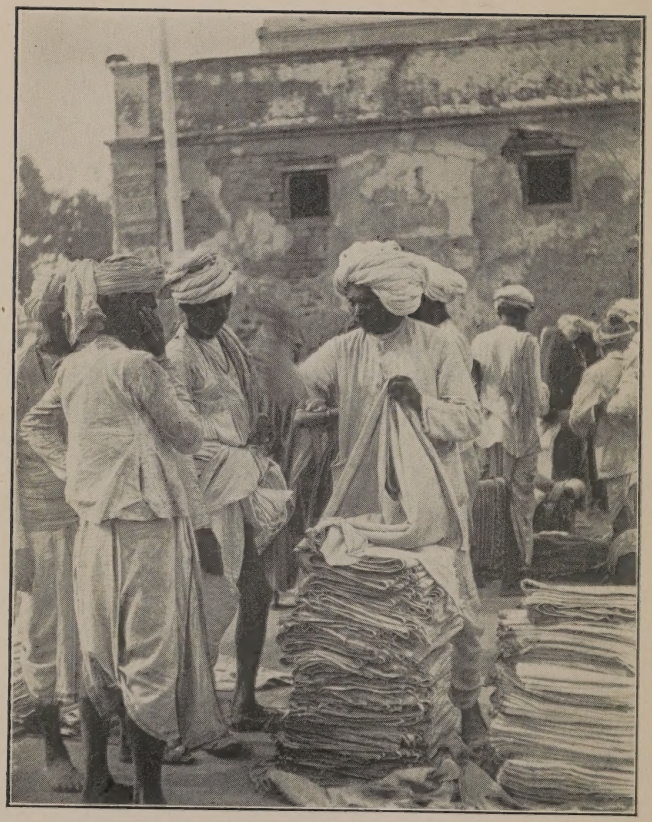
Every Ḍheḍ must have a *guru*, or religious guide; a Ḍheḍ without a guru is called *Na-garo*, and the proverb runs that when a guru-less man walks the earth the very ground sinks a yard beneath his feet with shame that so irreligious a man should tread upon it.

The methods of initiation differ most interestingly; but amongst most of the sects the usual plan seems to be for a boy to be brought to a guru when he is about five years old. The guru blows into his ear, gives him good advice, and tells him: 'What you do wrong will be on your own head; the merit of what you do right will accrue to me!' and makes the particular mark of his special sect on the boy's forehead.

In some cases he ties a necklace round the boy's neck, and the boy will ever after regard it as his most sacred oath to swear on that necklace.

In other sects, when the boy is initiated, the guru puts a little stick or straw into his hands, which the child breaks, to show that though he formerly belonged to the world, he is now free from it. Or again, sometimes the guru pours water from a spoon into the outstretched hand of the boy (one hand being supported by the other), who drinks it, and by so doing takes that guru for his own, and has to send him his yearly dues. Even if later on the boy joins another sect, that particular guru is known as his water-giver. The student of anthropology will find a fascinating piece of research in studying the different methods of initiation among the differing sects of the Ḍheḍs and other low castes.

The Ḍheḍs' tradition is that originally they all used to



IN THE BAZAAR

receive the Sacred Thread at their initiation, exactly as Brāhmans receive it to-day. They say that in those far-off times the threads were woven of cotton, in the self-same way as the Brāhmanical thread, and that they used to wear it over their shoulders just as Brāhmans do.

But gradually, as the Brāhman tyranny grew more powerful, they were only allowed to wear threads woven of grass, and only long enough to go round their necks. And, finally, these were altogether denied to children, and only grown men were allowed to wear even these shortened threads, and they only when actually engaged in worship.

The Boy goes to School

An outcaste is not allowed into an ordinary high-caste municipal school, but if there be a Ḍheḍ school close by, a Ḍheḍ boy will be sent to it in his fifth year.

The Ḍheḍs themselves are seldom schoolmasters, and have to depend generally on others opening schools for them; though they suffer from not being allowed to enter schools for higher castes, they themselves are equally tyrannical in their turn, and will not allow the children of those beneath them in the social scale, such as Sweepers, to enter their schools.

There is a distinct prejudice in some districts against the education of girls, and in one town where the writer was running a low-caste school, the elders held a meeting, and forbade any Ḍheḍs from sending their daughters under sanction of a heavy fine. It was interesting to notice that these uneducated low-castes used exactly the same arguments against women's education as the non-resident members of the University of Cambridge. So similar are the prejudices of the unenlightened all the world over!

But supposing that some philanthropist has opened a school nearby, the five-year-old boy will probably begin his school career on a Thursday, unless an astrologer should indicate another day; and strictly speaking it should open with the worship of the goddess Sarasvatī. This takes place in the school, where the family priest awaits the new boy. His parents bring a coconut, some turmeric, betel

nut, and a few oleander or jasmine blossoms, and the child piously carries a new slate and pencil.

The priest puts some water in the child's right hand, and marks his forehead with the auspicious red dot. Then he holds his hand whilst he makes his first steps to knowledge, by writing the words *Om*, *Śrī Sarasvatī*, *Śrī Gaṇeśa*. When these letters have been laboriously formed, the new boy sprinkles his slate with water, marks the headmaster with the auspicious dot, and making obeisance to him, offers him a rupee-and-a-quarter, and also a coconut, whilst the parents distribute sweets to the other children.

There seems much in this ceremony as described to the writer which would mitigate the hardships of a new boy's lot; but she is bound to add that she has never seen it performed, and doubts its frequency.

Betrothal

Having seen the children, whose life story we are following, safely through their childish illnesses, we must now proceed to get them married, or at least engaged. The younger a girl is betrothed amongst the Ḍheḍs, the greater the honour that accrues to the family; so the baby may be unweaned when she is engaged, or, as seems more frequently the case, be two or three years old, or for some reason or other the betrothal may be postponed even later. In most cases the boy is about two years older than the girl.

The manner of the betrothal differs widely in different districts. Sometimes it is carried out in the following way: After preliminary inquiries through relatives, two Ḍheḍs, friends of the young boy's father, go to a particular village, and sit down in a Ḍheḍ's house to gossip. After discussing a variety of topics, they say: 'We know a Ḍheḍ boy whose father wants to get him betrothed, and we hear that in such and such a house there is a girl. Do you know if her father is thinking about her engagement?' The neighbours go and ask this particular girl's father, and if he, like Barkis, is willing, they come back and escort the two strangers to the girl's house. They stay the night there, and are fed and supplied with country

liquor, and their host (the father of the desired girl) gives them perhaps a coconut; on leaving, the two strangers arrange when they shall come back with the boy's father for the formal engagement.

On the day fixed, the *Metara* (i.e. the small elected committee that rule the Ḍheḍs) is present, and the Ḍheḍ Brāhman.

The boy's father says in front of the committee how much he is willing to pay for the girl. Ḍheḍ weddings can be of two kinds, and so they now decide whether it shall be 'Limited' or 'Unlimited.' If the wedding is Limited, the girl's father asks the boy's father to give, say, sixty rupees as bride price, and in return he promises out of this to feast him perhaps twice. There is no honour in a Limited wedding where the bounds of the expense are fixed, but there is great honour in the second, the Unlimited, or Free Wedding, when, though the maximum bride price is fixed, it is agreed that it shall not be less than, say, forty rupees. The amount of feasting to be given in exchange is not defined.

All who are present are feasted, perhaps on sweetmeats, molasses, and dates. In some districts molasses are also distributed from the house of the bridegroom, and this is regarded as the sign that the betrothal has been definitely completed.

The betrothed girl is marked with the auspicious sign, either by the Ḍheḍ Brāhman, or by 'fortunate'[1] women, who come and sing to the guests.

Gifts are made, which differ in different localities; perhaps the boy's father gives two rupees, and the girl's father one-and-a-half rupees, and it is all spent on country liquor for the guests; or perhaps the boy's father gives nothing, and the father of the bride, instead of money, presents him with a sheet, worth one-and-a-half rupees. Again, in some villages the bridegroom's father brings a bodice, a shawl, and a skirt, and when the officiating Brāhman gives the sign, the girl retires into the house and puts them on whilst lucky women sing to her.

[1] i.e. Women who have never lost a son or a husband.

Sometimes the affair ends by the girl's father giving a coconut marked with five auspicious dots to the boy's father, which he takes home with him.

It is a very serious thing if this betrothal is broken, and the elected committee of the caste comes together to inquire into the reason.

It may be that some distant relationship has been discovered, or that the girl has gone blind, or is incurably ill; but if it is a frivolous excuse, or owing to sudden dislike, the commitee will fine the offending party, and insist that any expense the other side has incurred shall be refunded.

CHAPTER VI

THE WEDDING

Fixing the Date

The Ḍheḍ Brāhman decides which will be the most auspicious date for the actual wedding. A very favourite day is Vasanta Pañchami (the fifth day of the month Māgha [January–February], when the god of love, Kāma, is worshipped); and the Ḍheḍs often arrange the betrothal a month before this feast, as that is about the length of intimation they like.

When the day is fixed, the invitations are sent out, and as a favourite song says, these must be written in red ink and sprinkled with turmeric or saffron.

The Ḍheḍ Brāhman himself is supposed to take the invitations by hand, and does so, up to a distance of ten or twenty miles; but nowadays, when we are all growing less strenuous, he is glad to send the more distant invitations by post. Some days before the wedding the priest draws a picture of Gaṇeśa in red opposite the house door (or, if he lack artistic skill, buys one in the bazaar), and on either side of it draws a picture of Gaṇeśa's two wives, Siddhi and Buddhi. He then proceeds to knock a nail into the throat of each of these three, and to suspend garlands from them, and he puts the coconut marked with the five auspicious dots, that the boy's father had brought home from the betrothal, down on the ground before the pictures. The Brāhman proceeds to worship Gaṇeśa by bringing some lighted cow dung on a house tile, and putting it down also in front of the pictures, and on this he puts some sweet scented leaves. He also places there a little lamp of clarified butter, and repeating a *mantra*, pours melted butter on it and on the smoking cake of cow dung, whilst the women sing and the neighbouring

children crowd in to watch. In some cases, instead of the cow dung cake on the roof tile,[1] the priest simply takes an ordinary metal plate, on which he has arranged incense, a lighted lamp of clarified butter, rice, sopāri, and red powder, and this he offers to the picture of Gaṇeśa; he then repeats a mantra, and offers jasmine and *moghra* flowers and incense.

The worship of Gaṇeśa is carried out rather differently in other localities, where, instead of a picture or drawing of Gaṇeśa, the household image of the god is used. The priest puts the idol on a small tray or plate, on which he has already arranged a little lamp of clarified butter, rice and red powder. He then washes it all over with milk, marks it with the auspicious red dot on its forehead, and throws rice over it. Next he brings some embers from the family hearth on a roof tile, and on this tile he puts some pieces of coconut and a tennis ball-like sweet. Opposite the entrance door of the house he makes a tiny heap of rice, on which he places the image of Gaṇeśa.

In the girl's house, at any rate, this heap grows in size before the wedding day, for from every house she dines in before her wedding day she is careful to bring back a handful of rice to add to the pile.

The Bathing (*Pīṭhī*)

Immediately before the worship of Gaṇeśa in the bridegroom's house the boy (who will at his wedding represent a king) is washed by five 'lucky' women and dressed in the best loin cloth the house can afford. He takes his seat near the idol, and immediately after the worship these five lucky women pour liquid over him, not from a vessel, but from their hands. The liquid is water mixed with turmeric and scent, so it stains his body and loin cloth yellow. After this the boy puts on a good, but not too good, coat, the women sing, and people throw the turmeric at each other.

The ceremony of Pīṭhī takes place, too, in the girl's house, but they are careful that it and the Gaṇeśa worship should

[1] See the writer's *Rites of the Twice Born*, p. 274.

take place after, and not before, these ceremonies in the boy's house; so if he was bathed at five in either afternoon or morning, the girl will not be bathed till seven. It is the bride's sister-in-law (i.e. the wife of her eldest brother) who performs the ceremony. She rubs the girl down with turmeric and sweet scents, and then sweetmeats are distributed to women and children.

The Pīṭhī cannot be performed till after the Gaṇeśa worship, but it is repeated daily until the wedding, whether there be five or seven days that intervene.

The Bridegroom's Companions

In some houses two companions of his own age are given to the bridegroom directly after the ceremonial bathing. They are generally his special chums, who make his bed, pack for him and, when his own hands are full, hold the sword which marks him out as a king. Their special duty is to keep the bag in which are placed clove, cardamom, betel nut, almonds, currants, and sugar, and to give some of its contents to every guest. They might be described as his 'best men.'

The Ruby Pillar[1]

Some Ḍheḍs retain the custom of the Ruby Pillar. Either before or after the marriage booth is erected, they call in a carpenter. He takes a piece of wood about the size of a forearm and pierces it with two cross pieces. This is coloured yellow till it is the shade of a sadhu's clothes, and the carpenter himself deposits it in the house of the bride or bridegroom. The Ḍheḍ Brāhman, however, takes it out of the house when the booth is ready[2] and, being very careful to turn to the right hand as he leaves the door, he digs a hole in the ground. In this hole he first places a pice and a sopāri, and then inserts the Ruby Pillar, and round its cross pieces he ties a thread strung with a miṇḍhaḷ nut and some *darbha* grass.

[1] See *Rites of the Twice Born*, p. 61.

[2] In other districts the Ruby Pillar is put up first and the booth later. Some Ḍheḍs deny all knowledge of the Ruby Pillar.

The Wedding Booth

Wedding booths are erected on the same day in front of both the girl's and the boy's houses. This booth is in some districts erected before, and in some, after, the Ruby Pillar has been placed in position; four poles are placed in the ground, on them strips of bamboo are laid, and the whole is thatched with straw. The sides of the booth are hung with gaily coloured cloth, and the inside decorated with photographs and pictures. Some fixed uneven number of days will elapse between the erection of the booth and the actual wedding, and during this time the prospective bridegroom will go and dine with different friends and relatives, and his two faithful protectors will never fail to accompany him.

Swinging the Water Pots

A very interesting rite now takes place in both homes. The mother takes a small plate such as is in daily use, and on it places some rice, turmeric powder, and a small lump of melted butter. Another woman brings two earthen vessels for holding water, and sometimes together, sometimes in company with other women, they go off to get water (the bride, strangely enough, does not go with them). They fill the water pots and hold them in position with a piece of cloth till they come to some convenient open space, where they are joined by either five or seven women (note, not six), who are carrying empty water pots. For about half an hour the women go round, singing and throwing the empty vessels up and down in their hands, and over their heads; but very careful, you may be sure, that not one of them falls to the ground.

Then they go singing to their homes, and the relatives who carried the two full water pots put them in front of the picture of Gaṇeśa, which we have already noticed; and sometimes the betrothal coconut with its auspicious dots is put on the top.

In the next rite the maternal uncle plays the chief part, in the case both of the girl and of the boy. This uncle is

careful not to go to the actual house of the bride or bridegroom, but to that of some neighbour, who is not a relative, and this friend sends word of his arrival. Then the mother of the bride or of the bridegroom, as the case may be, takes a plate, with a lighted lamp, sugar and rice, summons her women friends, and they all go singing in procession to the neighbour's house. The unfortunate uncle has to provide the bride or the bridegroom with the clothes they will wear for the ceremony, and to give the mother also her wedding clothes and jewellery. He puts them on a winnowing fan, and calls the attention of the neighbours very pointedly to the fact that he is giving, perhaps, fifty rupees' worth of clothes, or a hundred rupees' worth of jewellery. The child's mother places the winnowing fan and its contents on the uncle's head for a moment, and marks his forehead with the auspicious dot, which after all, seems a fairly cheap recompense. In addition to the other jewellery, the uncle also has to provide a crown for the mother, which she now puts on, and so they set out for the child's home, the uncle walking first, and his sister following, wearing her crown and singing as she goes.

In some districts at this point a Turi[1] appears upon the scene, banging a drum. A white cloth is spread before him, and some one calls 'Give! . . .' Almost every member of the wedding group, and of the caste, goes up and deposits some grain on the cloth, which the Turi picks up and keeps. The Turi goes with the wedding procession in nearly all districts, whether he has previously been given this offering of uncooked grain or not.

The Evening Procession

In Kāṭhiāwār, the evening before the bridegroom starts out to fetch his bonny bride, he and all the friends who are going with him go in procession round their own village. The bridegroom wears a gorgeous red turban, to show his grandeur, but to guard against the malign jealousy this display might call forth, he inserts in it a lemon and a

[1] i.e. A member of a low caste, who earn their livelihood by playing instruments and begging.

needle. If anyone wishes to understand the intricate ceremony of a Nāgara Brāhman wedding, they have to realise that there the bride and bridegroom represent an ascetic god and his bride—Śiva and Parbati; but now, if they are to understand a Ḍheḍ wedding, they must realise that it is a king and his queen that the happy couple represent. So the bridegroom carries a sword in his hand, or, if the family funds cannot rise to the purchase of a sword, he holds a longish knife, or a bow and arrow, in as kingly a manner as possible, and if, during the course of the procession, he meets a carriage, or even a motor, it will have to get out of his way, since for the moment he is indeed a king!

Many of the bridegroom's neighbours have been coming to his home every evening for a week previously, and singing hymns there, but now on the seventh night they sing more loudly than ever. Several of the wedding guests had arrived at the beginning of the week, and his father had felt bound to provide them with three stout meals a day, but all of them have arrived by the seventh day, and they have a bigger feast, and join in the evening procession, wearing their newest and finest clothes.

A horse, if in any way possible, is borrowed for the occasion, and on this the happy bridegroom sits, with his sister perched behind him, holding a small vessel containing some rough salt, small coins, and sopāri nuts. The men of the procession precede the horse, and the women follow after. First among the women comes the boy's mother, carrying a tiny lamp of melted butter, and some wheat, cotton, and oil-seed, and then the other women come, singing the appropriate songs. There are special songs for every stage of a wedding—Booth Song, Procession Song, and so forth—but many of these are unpleasantly suggestive.

If the bridegroom lives in the same village as the bride, the procession stops opposite her door, and they tie garlands of mango and *aśoka* leaves to it. But the ordinary thing is to choose a bride who lives in another village.

The next morning the procession starts out for the girl's village. Supposing the relatives are so poor that they cannot afford a horse, the bridegroom's maternal uncle may

have to carry the boy, seated astride, on his hip—the long-suffering uncle will be glad if the bridegroom is still an infant!—and, as if that were not enough, the poor uncle is actually called a horse! The bridegroom is dressed in a red coat and old trousers, given by the same uncle, and puts on every bit of jewellery that he possesses, on his feet and hands. On his head he wears a crescent-shaped crown, and he is also given an enormous garland of flowers, that reaches right down to his feet. A miṇḍhaḷ fruit is tied round his wrist, and in his hand he carries a coconut, marked with the auspicious red spots.

A triumphal arch of aśoka leaves has been erected at the end of the Ḍheḍ quarter, and all the procession walk out under it.

After the bridegroom comes his little sister, as we have seen before, wearing new clothes and fine jewellery, and carrying in her hand the little metal vessel with the rough salt. She covers this with her sāri, and waves it at the back of the boy's head.

The drummer goes before, banging his drum, and another man clanging cymbals. The boy's mother follows after, wearing the clothes and jewellery the uncle has given, and her crown of ceremony, and carrying the inevitable little plate with the lamp of melted butter, rice, etc. Her friends walk behind her, and they all go singing as far as the end of the town,[1] where a cloth is spread, and the bridegroom is seated on it. His mother steps forward, marks the little lad with the auspicious mark, and feeds him with unrefined sugar, and throws the rice she has been carrying on her plate over him.

After this the women go singing to their own homes, and the long-suffering uncle picks up the boy and sets him either on a horse or on his own hip.

And now a most pathetic incident takes place; the uncle carries the lad to the nearest temple of Śiva, but the pitiful fact of their caste debars them from near approach to the god they would fain worship, and they have to be content with standing outside and doing him reverence. They offer a few coins as tribute, but the priest of the temple will not

[1] In some districts the women go all the way in the procession.

take the money straight from their hands, he is so afraid that he might accidentally touch them, and so be polluted; so he makes them throw the coins down in the dust,[1] and then he can pick them up with safety.

The bridegroom is specially careful to make a reverence to Śiva, and then the procession starts out in real earnest. It may go by rail or road—in some districts it is forbidden to go by cart, in others this is the usual conveyance—but one thing you may be sure, whatever river they cross, the bridal party will drop some present, a coin, or a sopāri nut or a coconut, into the stream, to insure their having good luck. This offering is not confined to wedding processions; any canny merchant going on an important business trip may think it advisable to drop a coconut out of the railway carriage window into a river he is crossing.

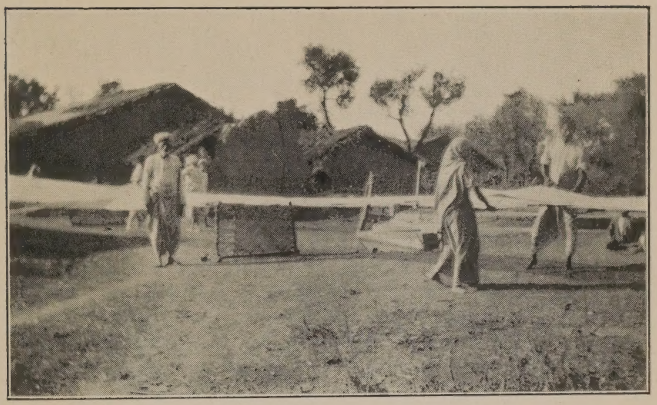
Arrived at their destination, the stationmaster probably bars the gate against them till propitiated with sweetmeats; or, if they have gone by road, a police outpost will bar their way, and ask for similar gifts.

As soon as the party reaches the outskirts of the girl's village, they again spread a cloth, and seat the bridegroom on it, whilst fireworks are let off to announce his arrival.

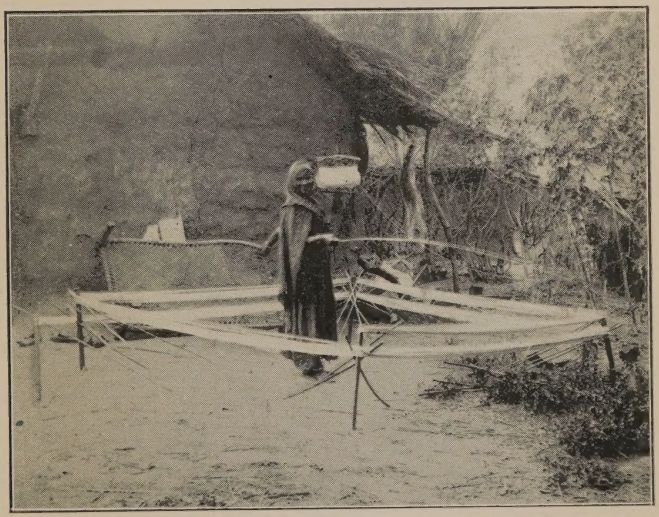
Someone is sent out to see which particular marriage procession has arrived, and the mother of the bride puts on her crown and all her best clothes, and calling her women friends, starts out to meet it singing. They carry two torches made by tying rags to long sticks, and also take with them an earthen vessel, containing water and treacle.

When they meet, the girl's mother makes the auspicious mark on the bridegroom's forehead, pours some treacle and water down his throat, and throws some rice over him, and then distributes the remainder of the treacle and water amongst his friends. In return, the boy's father puts at least five rupees in the vessel that held the treacle and water. The long-suffering uncle picks up the little bridegroom, and the whole assembly moves on to the Ḍheḍ

[1] Sometimes a shopman will make his outcaste customers throw their coins in the dust, and then sprinkle water over them; but the writer has never actually seen a temple priest sprinkle coins.



A ḌHEḌ WOMAN PREPARING THE THREADS FOR WINDING



A ḌHEḌ WOMAN WINDING WARP

quarter, over the entrance to which a garland of aśoka leaves has been hung.

Welcoming the Bridegroom

The uncle, holding the boy, stands under the garland, and in some districts the priest of the girl's family—the boy's priest has remained at home—comes out, takes hold of the boy's hand, which, according to local custom, is grasping a sword, a knife, or an arrow, and makes the tip of the weapon touch the wreath. In other districts the girl's mother now approaches, holding a plate on which are four pieces of *bājarī* (millet) or wheat straw, some grains of rice, some turmeric, and a tiny lamp. The priest directs her to throw the four pieces of straw towards the four corners of the world. In any case the future mother-in-law seems again to mark the boy's forehead with the auspicious mark, putting rice and turmeric on it, and again to give him treacle and water to drink, and his father may have to put five rupees on the dish.

The members of the bridegroom's procession are then taken to the girl's home, and seated on beds outside the house, and their feet are ceremonially washed. In some villages this is done by the bride's father himself, who begins with the bridegroom and then works steadily through the whole number of the procession. In other places the work falls on the aunts and uncles of the bride. The boy's father may have to put two rupees for the girl's father in the water in which the feet have been bathed.

The Feeding of the Bridegroom

By now the visitors are getting hungry, but first the bridegroom must be fed. The girl's mother therefore brings a big dish outside the house. But the boy must look well to its contents, for in some places this first dish is a practical joke, made by piling treacle on treacle, and melted butter on melted butter, till anyone who should eat of it would be sore stricken with indigestion. So in playful neighbourhoods a canny bridegroom just puts down a rupee-and-a-quarter on the first dish, and waits till the second dish is brought, consisting perhaps of rice, or per-

haps of treacle and melted butter. He takes a little of this, still sitting outside the house, and shares it with his special friends. Then the whole of the bridgegroom's party are summoned and feasted, either inside the girl's house or in the place set apart for caste feasts.

The Night before the Wedding

In certain districts the bridegroom spends the remainder of the night in the house of some friend or relative of the bride; even if he lived in the same town he could not have gone to his own house, but must have spent it in a specially prepared and highly decorated room belonging to some relative of the bride. If the bridegroom is representing a king, he wears his royal clothes, turban, trousers, coat, and even shoes. He keeps his sword, a coconut, and his handkerchief beside him. His friends try whilst he is sleeping to steal something belonging to him, and this is the reason why—let us hope for the only time in his life!—he goes to bed in his boots. It is the special duty of his 'best men' to guard him from thieves, for if anything is stolen the bridegroom will have to redeem it at the price of a rupee, and the 'best men' will be jeered at for their carelessness.[1] On rising the next morning the groom does not bathe, lest he wash off his 'royalty.'

The little bride stays in her own house, which also has been specially decorated, and if she represents a queen, she must wear her royal grandeur all night, and also be careful not to wash on the morrow. In certain districts the girl sleeps all night by herself, but wearing the bridegroom's scarf of ceremony, which had been previously knotted to her shawl-like overdress by the priest in the wedding booth; in other places this tying of the scarf seems only to take place at the actual wedding.

Next morning early, after much singing, the bridegroom is served with food from the girl's house, and his friends are fed when he has finished.

The priest meanwhile has been busy in the wedding booth. Before the bridegroom's procession had arrived an uneven

[1] In many places this custom is quite unknown.

number of 'fortunate' women,[1] probably five or seven, had been to the potter's yard, and brought back the earthen jars which are used at all Hindu and Jain weddings. These earthen pots are graded from big to little, and though they are empty, they are gaily decorated. Seven of them are arranged in order of size in each of the four corners of the wedding booth, and on the space between the jars the seat for bride and bridegroom is placed.

The Wedding Seat is very interesting.[2] In the case of the Ḍheḍ weavers, it is just the piece of wood on which the hand-made cloth is wound, but now a gaily coloured quilt is spread over it. (If the young people had belonged to the Kunbi or Koli castes they would have sat on a yoke.) Sometimes a pestle is placed in front of this seat. The priest makes a design in flour representing the nine planets and marks it with red powder.

The Sacrificial Hearth

The priest also arranges a sacrificial hearth, probably drawing a small oblong in flour and red powder. Inside this the *swastika* symbol is sometimes drawn, and on it a few copper coins, cloves, betel and areca nut are arranged in some places. At the four corners brass vessels filled with water are placed; on each of these is a coconut marked with the auspicious red dot, and round these four vessels a cotton thread is wound.

As soon as the sun shows in the heavens, the little bride and bridegroom make their appearance, their respective uncles very often carrying in the children and placing them on the seat of honour, facing the sun.

In many districts the girl is completely swathed, so that her face does not show. If she had slept wearing the boy's knotted scarf, it would now be returned to him.

The priest seats himself opposite to them on the further side of the Sacrificial Hearth. The bride's mother and father

[1] See p. 39, note.

[2] If the boy's scarf had been tied the night before to the girl's shawl it is on this seat they would have sat, the tying taking place with very much the same ceremonies that are now observed.

take their places a little lower on the third side of the hearth, and on the fourth sits the bridegroom's father, and his mother if present. The bride's mother may wear a crown of cardboard covered with silver or gold paper, and perhaps decorated also with peacock feathers, or simply one of grass, and if the local custom permits the bridegroom's mother to be present, she too will wear a similar crown.

The priest ties a miṇḍhaḷ fruit and a garland of flowers on the right wrist of both the girl and the boy. Then turning to the bride's parents he binds a red thread to the right wrists of both father and mother, and also a red thread round the father's throat, and hangs it on to his chest.

In front of the parents of both parties are empty trays, a tray filled with rice and red powder and a vessel of melted butter, while another containing scented oil seeds, millet and cotton, and holding also a little saucer-lamp of melted butter is in front of the priest. The priest proceeds to arrange the empty trays similarly to his own.

In the centre of the sacrificial hearth is a coconut, which has been stripped of its fibre. The Brāhman pours melted butter over the shell till it is well saturated, and then places a lighted wick of thread on the coconut, which promptly catches fire. Whilst it is burning, the priest recites sacred verses, and the bride and bridegroom, and as many as are present of their four parents, take the melted butter from the vessels in front of them and pour it over this burning coconut, and then proceed to empty over it all the other things that had been arranged before them.

Wedding Presents

By the time the priest has recited four mantras, the coconut and its various trimmings should be completely burnt through ; so as soon as he has finished reciting, two of the parents judge that the time has half gone, and seize the opportunity to show the wedding presents to the crowd. There is no thought of 'giving by stealth and blushing to find it known'! On the contrary, first, the bride's father, mother, uncles, aunts, cousins and friends produce the silk clothes, household vessels and jewellery that they have

given her. If they are rich enough they give beds, and even houses. Then the friends of the bridegroom, not to be outdone, show their presents of turbans and scarves—these are not generally as valuable as the presents to the bride.

The Joint Meal in Secret

After the present-giving, whilst the coconut is still burning, and the priest still reciting sacred verses, comes the pretty little ceremony of the joint meal.

A little tray containing sweet food—molasses and wheat flour—which has been prepared in the bride's house, is brought to the priest. He puts a sheet over the heads of the bride and bridegroom, and hands the tray in under the sheet to the happy pair. The groom in secret then places a morsel in the bride's mouth, and she in her turn does the same to him. Whilst they are still hidden from the vulgar gaze by the sheet, a cup is passed under it that they may both drink from the same cup.

The priest finishes the recital of the sacred verses and the parents move away from their seats.

The Marriage Circumambulation

The coconut now is burnt up, but a little fire of melted butter still remains in the hollow wherein the coconut had rested. Round this the ceremonial circumambulation takes place.

The priest goes first, reciting other sacred verses as he moves round the fire with his left hand towards it.

The bridegroom follows him, still holding in his hand the sword that he has had by him all the time, and the little bride follows, a corner of her shawl-like over dress being tied to the bridegroom's scarf. They circumambulate the fire four times, and this finishes the wedding proper.

In certain districts the shawl and the scarf were tied together by the priest as he said the sacred verse, and they circumambulate the fire with the boy's right hand nearest the fire, the girl walking meekly behind, holding her groom's hand, but holding it so that her hand is submissively under, not over, his. But for all this outward

meekness, at the completion of each of the four rounds she hurriedly tries to sit down before him, for that will mean that she, not he, is the real ruler of the house. Sometimes they circle the fire seven times instead of four times, but do not sit down at the end of the fifth or sixth round.

The End of the Wedding

Sometimes, too, the Brāhman completes the wedding by opening their hands and pouring treacle into them, and then untying the knot that bound the scarf and shawl together, reciting a sacred verse as he does so. By now it is probably noon.

The happy pair separate as they did on the previous evening. The girl in certain districts still wears the bridegroom's scarf and goes into her own home for a meal, whilst the bridegroom and his two companions return to their lodging.

The Bride Price

After the meal an all-important meeting is held in the booth before the bride's house. It is at this meeting that the bride price is paid.

And now we have come to one of the burning questions of social reform. The whole conscience of the caste is against the payment of this bride price. They feel it reduces the bride to the position of a slave who is bought and paid for. It is idle to talk of freedom of choice, when a young and beautiful girl is sold to any old man because she pleases his jaded fancy, and he can afford to pay avaricious relatives any sum they like to ask.

There are dark stories, too, of incest connected with these sales, when an old father pays the price ostensibly for his son to marry a young girl.

The buying of wives is forbidden (but practised) in the Christian Church. Any experienced missionary will tell of old hags who go round whispering that such and such a girl is old enough to be married, and as she is 'college-trained' she will be sure to earn a good salary. Avaricious uncles and aunts and cousins to the fourth degree take up the story, on the outlook for stray rupees that may grease their

itching palms, and a whole machinery of intrigue is secretly put in motion that utterly defeats any idea of marrying for love. 'It reduces our girls,' said one indignant Indian, 'to the level of buffaloes.' The very amount of lying and chicanery connected with these sellings is a further proof of how deeply it is against the conscience of the Christian Church. The agreed sum is sometimes left lying at the root of a tree, in order that the people concerned may be able to say that no money passed from hand to hand.

Amongst some Christians there is no concealment that some money is paid, and some Missions scarcely try and prevent it.[1] Amongst non-Christians, if the wedding is one where expenses are fixed, the price is probably about sixty rupees. If it is a wedding with unlimited expenses, the ostensible price was very likely one hundred and one rupees-and-a-quarter, but this is only the nominal price; secretly a great deal more is often paid over for a suitable bride, though the caste disapproves of these secret enhanced prices.

However quarrelsome and miserly the bridegroom's father is, he always pays the bride price. The caste indeed will not allow the bride to go to the bridegroom's house until the money is paid over. The bride's father as a matter of fact gains very little by this price, for the wedding expenses have been far more than a hundred rupees; indeed one feast alone may have cost him sixty.

It is clear, therefore, that any movement for the abolition of the selling of brides will have to go hand in hand with the curtailment of wedding expenses.

Once the payment is made the guests depart, and if it is a lucky day for a journey the bride and bridegroom may leave for his home on that day too. If it is an unlucky day the bride will spend that night in her old home, the bridegroom staying on in his separate lodgings.

[1] Dhed Christians secretly pay sums ranging from one hundred to eight hundred rupees for a suitable bride.

The Bride visits Her Mother-in-law

And here we have come again to a place where there is a wide divergence of custom, but in certain localities it is usual for the little bride to go to her mother-in-law's house directly after the wedding as a guest of honour for a ten days' visit.

Before starting out with her husband she takes leave of her father and mother, and then goes to the image of Gaṇeśa which is still on the heap of grain—this image must remain there until the bride returns home. This done, the young wife goes and stands on the verandah of the house, whilst a corner of her sāri is filled with rice, and a small coconut is placed in it; then she cries a little, poor child, as she takes leave of all her friends. Her mother as a last present gives her an earthen jar filled with sweetmeats, and carefully covered with a green cloth, and may possibly throw rice over the boy; then they start for the boy's home. There in some districts the two, or the boy alone, are welcomed with fireworks, singing, and genial horse-play, and his mother (if she has stayed at home) now marks him with an auspicious dot, and throws rice over him.

But if the little bride be present, she worships her mother-in-law's feet, and gives her one-and-a-quarter rupees as a present.

After greeting everyone she goes to the hearth and cooks the rice that she has brought in her sāri. She next finds where the family god is kept—very probably it is just opposite the entrance door—and in front of it breaks the coconut. Then, taking a tile from the roof, she places a live ember on it from the fire and scatters incense over it. As soon as the smoke rises from the tile she puts a little bit of the coconut and some of the cooked rice on the tile, and then carefully places it on the ground in front of the family god. This god may be a Śakti, or Kāḷikā, or Becharāji. If it be a benign god, the children of the house will eat some of the rice and coconut, but if it be Chāmuṇḍā, that is the family deity, no one will eat the food; it cannot even be given to cows, but must be carefully buried out of harm's way, in some corner of the house.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER THE WEDDING

NEITHER bride nor bridegroom will wash till three days have elapsed, and not till the above mentioned rice has been eaten will the little bride take off her wedding clothes.

It is interesting to notice that in certain districts the girl's father and mother continue to wear their wedding clothes (however dirty) as long as the wedding booths remain up; unfortunately in these particular districts they often remain up for a month-and-a-quarter!

In other places the wedding booth in the girl's house is taken down by 'lucky women,'[1] the day after the bride has left. These women are of course specially careful with the Ruby Pillar; they first throw rice over it, and then cast it into some water, if possible the sea; or failing that, a river or even a well. The earthen vessels are given away, half going to the bridegroom's friends—but never to his father or mother—and half to the bride's.

The booth in the boy's house in some localities is taken down on the same day, its Ruby Pillar too being thrown into water; but of course there were no earthen vessels to give away.

Now, too, both bride and bridegroom are allowed to alter their costumes a little. The girl may take off her shawl-like overdress, but not her skirt or camisole. The boy similarly may only remove his turban and his shoes; neither may bathe, and they sleep separately at night. On the following day they are allowed to wash as much as they like, and to wear what they choose.

[1] See p. 39, note.

Sending Round the Wedding Cake

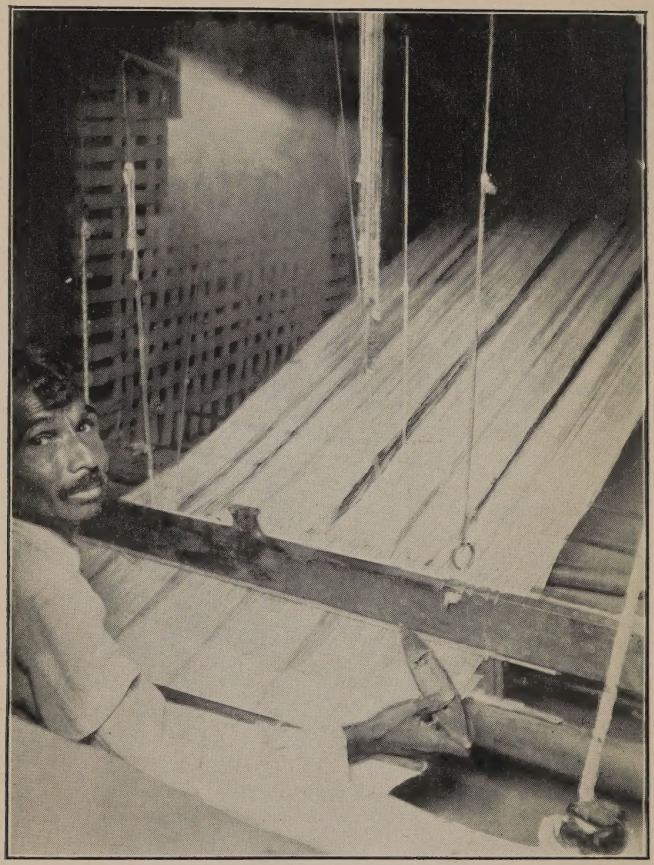
And now to look at the image of Gaṇeśa. In the girl's home it remains on the heap of grain until the girl comes back home ten days later; but in the bridegroom's house on the same day that the wedding booth is taken down the bridegroom himself removes the image from the heap of grain, and places it in its accustomed niche. He is careful to scatter a few grains of rice over it before he touches it. The women of the house now come forward, and taking the grain on which Gaṇeśa stood, grind it and make it into tennis-ball-like sweets (*lāḍu*). The little bride, though she is staying in the house, is allowed to take no part in this. For during the whole of her ten days' visit she is treated as an honoured guest, and not allowed to grind or sweep or fill the water-pots.

The heap of grain has now grown considerably; for the boy has brought back a handful of grain for it from every house he entered, once the wedding booth had been erected, and the wedding preparations really begun.

To each of these houses he now sends a lāḍu, and they are also distributed amongst the caste, who regard them as sacred food (*naivedya*).

The young wife spends her ten days pleasantly enough in her husband's house. She goes out visiting with her mother-in-law, and the latter's friends all give her presents. Of course the girl is too young for the marriage to be consummated, and at the end of ten days her own father or mother comes to fetch her away. On their arrival they are welcomed with special dishes, and they probably stay the night. Before the little girl leaves the next morning she worships the feet of her mother-in-law, father-in-law, and any uncles or aunts-in-law who may be in the vicinity.

As soon as she arrives at her own home she worships the image of Gaṇeśa, which is still standing on the heap, throws rice over it, marks it with the auspicious mark, and puts it in its accustomed place. Being no longer a visitor, but in her own home, the bride herself grinds the grain, and makes the lāḍu, which are distributed amongst her friends.



THE DAILY TOIL

The Ḍheḍs are always interested in the English custom of sending wedding-cake after a marriage, and compare it to their custom of distributing lāḍu.

It all depends on the bride's age how long she will remain living as an ordinary unmarried girl in her own father's house. In any case she will probably remain there until the autumnal Feast of Lights (Dīvāḷī), and as the wedding very likely took place in the Spring,[1] this gives her a month or two's pause before entering on all the cares of the marriage state. But if the bride is very young at the time of the wedding, she may live at home for a year or two.

When the bride is probably about twelve or thirteen (the age differs according to the locality), the bridegroom's parents and some of their men friends go and call at the bride's house. They are seated on a bed outside the house, food is given them, and the Caste Committee (*Metara*) is summoned.

The bridegroom's father says that he has come to fetch the bride away, and the girl's father asks: 'Have you brought things in accordance with the custom of the caste?' The bridegroom's father replies in the affirmative, and hands over some five or ten rupees to this Committee of Five who rule the Ḍheḍs. These hand them on to the bride's father, who promises to send her at the next Feast of Lights.

The Bride leaves Her Old Home

So at Dīvāḷī the boy's priest is sent to bring her away. The bride's father feeds him, and provides the bride with new clothes and jewellery for fingers and toes, neck and ears. It is interesting to notice that now for the first time she is given shoes to wear. As our English grandmothers, even if they were only seventeen, put on caps to show that they were married matrons, so the Ḍheḍ girls put on shoes, not stockings, which, strictly speaking, no woman should ever wear.

[1] Perhaps in the month of Māgha, or in the first half of Phālguna or any time in Chaitra, Vaiśākha, Āśāḍha, or Śrāvaṇa; but not in the months Bhādrapada or Āśvina.

The bride's forehead is marked with the auspicious dot, and her mother provides a little bag—a vanity bag we might call it—containing all the harmless frivolities with which her little daughter may make herself beautiful for the eyes of her husband. It contains a little bottle of oil for her hair, red stuff for the auspicious mark, and lamp-black for her eyelashes, a comb, and a looking-glass. The vanity bag, oddly enough, she gives to the visiting priest to carry. (Imagine the feelings of a typical Scotch Presbyterian minister if he, on his visitations, were given such a bag to carry!)

Then a little procession is formed through the village. The bridegroom's priest walks first, and then the bride and her mother and her mother's women friends. All seize the opportunity—trust them!—to give the young girl good advice, and when the outskirts of their village are reached, they all bid her farewell. She cries a little, and they all stroke her head to comfort her, and she goes off alone with her husband's priest.

Arrived at her mother-in-law's house, that august lady comes out and rubs her head a little, and all the neighbouring women come out to welcome her. The piece of wood for winding cloth is placed in front of the house, and covered with a quilt. The boy and girl take their seats on it, and the priest draws a map of the nine planets, in the centre of which he arranges a little lighted lamp of melted butter. As he pours melted butter over this he recites sacred verses.

Then once more he ties the boy's scarf and the corner of the girl's shawl together, and now pours a little treacle into their hands, and tells them to eat it. This done, he unties the scarf and shawl, and the young pair are free to begin their new life together; but not in their own separate home. Even now the young wife may perhaps stay only ten days in her mother-in-law's house, and then her father's priest may come to take her to her own mother's home.

Divorce

Amongst high-caste Hindus divorce is not even possible, but unfortunately amongst low-castes it is very easy, and

therefore very common. If the two young people do not get on together, or if there is in either a physical defect, they will break their marriage; but the most usual reason is barrenness on the part of the woman. It used to be said that divorce could be obtained almost to an indefinite extent, and that before they finally settled to wedded life most Ḍheḍ couples had more than once changed their partners. The crux of divorce, as in the marriage, is the financial arrangement.

When the young people have decided that they can no longer live together, the girl's father and his witnesses (probably members of the Ḍheḍ ruling Council of Five) come to the boy's village and solemnly sit down on its outskirts. Word is sent that they have arrived, and the boy's father and his witnesses go and sit down beside them. Before anything definite is done, however, with great canniness the witnesses make the two parents promise that they will assent to whatever agreement the two sets arrive at, and then send the parents off to sit and wait, out of hearing, whilst they decide on the exact sum. After long haggling, the two parties fix a definite amount, and doubtless warned by long experience of the cupidity of parents, reduce this to writing before shewing it to the two fathers.

The girl's father, of course, will eventually have to pay, but before he knows his liability the boy is summoned before them. A stamped paper is bought in the bazaar, a writer skilled in the writing out of divorce is also fetched.

The divorce is formally written, and the witnesses affix their signs, and still the amount is unrevealed, but before the bridegroom himself signs he is told the price.

Still suspicious of human nature—and they are wise, for they are dealing with it at its lowest, its most avaricious, and its most impure—the two sets of witnesses call in a third party, an absolute outsider, and into his hands they put the written divorce, instructing him not to hand it over until the rupees are actually paid down.

The girl's father then fetches the money, probably from a money-lender; the bridegroom's father carefully scrutinises

and counts the coins. Then he declares that he accepts them, and intructs the third party to hand over the written divorce.

Re-Marriage

A second marriage is a very brief affair, and nothing at all is done to hide the stark fact that it is entirely an affair of buying and selling. The bride is, however, given some choice in the matter, indeed the proverb runs—'The first marriage was in the father's hands, the second is in the girl's.' The custom differs in various localities; but as a rule the would-be bridegroom takes a friend with him as witness, and goes to call at the house of the girl who has attracted him. The witness (not the suitor) asks the girl to come to his home, and there the possible bridegroom meets her, and the two young people talk things over together. The witness reports to the two fathers that the two seem mutually attracted, and, after long haggling, the two fathers and the witness agree as to the bride price, which may vary from five hundred to a thousand rupees. The father of the prospective bride then fetches the girl, the boy and his friend to his own home, and seats them on a bed and feeds them. The ruling Committee of Five is summoned and told what price has been fixed, and the bridegroom makes the girl a small present, perhaps five rupees, for cloth. He then takes his leave, promising to come back on the following Tuesday or Sunday to fetch her away.

On the appointed day the bridegroom arrives with his friends, and is fed. The Ḍheḍ priest brings in a little tray with a lighted lamp, and another with lāḍu. The father of the bridegroom pays over the rupees, and in return is fed by the priest on those sweetmeats.

The bride then dons her new clothes, and that same night goes to the bridegroom's village, being careful to reach there before sunrise. Arrived at the village, she does not go to her bridegroom's house, but to the home of one of his friends, whilst her young husband goes off to his own.

Then the actual wedding takes place. It is just a shorter form of the ordinary Ḍheḍ wedding.

The mother of the bridegroom and his priest go in procession with the women and girls to where the bride is staying, and bring her back with singing to the bridegroom's house. The priest seats them both on the piece of wood on which ordinarily the cloth is wound, draws the plan of the planets, and places on it the lighted lamp of melted butter.

Then, saying the appropriate sacred verses, he ties the scarf and shawl together, again repeating verses and gives them molasses to eat together. As soon as they have eaten it he unties the knot, and the two are married—until a fresh divorce does them part.

CHAPTER VIII

DEATH

DEATH enters a Dheḍ home all too frequently. Ill-fed and poor, a Dheḍ can put up but a feeble resistance to illness, and the very fact of his being an outcaste debars him from getting assistance from a Hindu doctor. However philanthropic a high-caste doctor himself was, his other patients would all leave him if they knew he was being polluted by attending a low-caste.

When it is quite clear that death is approaching, a wadded quilt is spread on the ground and the sufferer is placed on it with his head to the north and his feet to the south.

A heap of unhusked rice is placed on the ground north of the dying man's head, and on this is arranged a little saucer, with a tiny wick floating in melted butter. A rather striking ceremony next takes place. The wife and the sons and other close relatives go and sit around the patient, and one after another they dip their five fingers into water and then into the dying man's mouth. As they place their fingers into his mouth they say, 'Pass Away!' and all doors and windows are thrown open.

If he is rich, the dying man may direct that so much be spent on his funeral rites, or that a fixed sum be given to his daughter; but all the time now until he actually expires the relatives will keep on dropping water into his mouth.

The moment the breath leaves the man's body every one joins in raising the death-wail, and no one who has ever heard it can forget the utter hopelessness of the sound.

Meanwhile other friends go off to the bazaar and buy cloth. It is interesting to notice exactly what they purchase. If it is a widow who has died, they buy red cloth to wrap her body in; but there must be no printed pattern on it. If, on

the other hand, it is a married woman who has died, leaving a husband to survive her, they choose red silk with a pattern of white dots.

A man is always buried in white cotton cloth, and so is a two or three year-old child, but a baby's dead body is not wrapped up in specially purchased cloth at all.

Whilst they are in the bazaar they also buy four coconuts.

The bier is next fashioned. Two big bamboos are laid parallel to each other, and seven smaller bamboos are tied across them. Millet straw is laid over these, and with darbha grass on the top, each of the four coconuts is tied to the corners of the bier.

Meanwhile the corpse is bathed in water and dressed either in a new unwashed loin-cloth, or, in the case of a woman, a new unwashed sāri.

Then they take some uncooked millet flour mixed with water and weld it into two tennis-ball-like cakes or lāḍus.

The Funeral Procession

The relatives bring the dead man's body out, and taking away the heap of rice which lay at his head, they put a lāḍu there, and over this they arrange an upturned earthen vessel. The rice, however, is placed on a plate of bell metal, and this the widow has to carry. The corpse is borne by four men, and if there are children, they carry torches, whilst the widow walks behind, throwing rice.

If we take our stand and watch the lonely procession we shall notice, first of all, a man carrying seven millet loaves, and also a lāḍu. He keeps the lāḍu intact as yet, but he breaks the loaves and throws them to the dogs. Behind him come five bhagats, or holy men, one of whom will superintend the occhava or sing-song, two play on cymbals, another leads the singing of a special death-song, which the fourth man sings after him, whilst the fifth plays the drum. The death-song tells over and over again the truth that so dominates and colours the thinking of all Indian people—that man does not stay long in this world.

After the holy men comes the corpse, with its four bearers and two torch bearers, followed by the widow. It is important to notice her dress. If she is wearing her best

clothes and all her jewellery, it shows that her husband died whilst still a young man; if she is just wearing the ordinary clothes that she happened to have on when her husband died, it proves that the corpse is that of an old man. After her follow the other women, mourning, and then come the rest of the men.

You must notice, too, through what aperture the corpse is brought from the house, whether a window or a door. It all depends when the man died. If he was so unfortunate as to die during the ill-omened days, his corpse cannot be carried through the house door. For in common with many an Indian high-caste Brāhman, or mercantile Jain, the Ḍheḍs believe that if they carry a corpse through the front door at that season, the Angel of Death will come through it again and again, to fetch fresh victims, till five complete the death toll. So, however narrow the window at the back of the house is, the friends will bring the dead body through that, even if they have to lift it off the bier.

When the procession reaches the outskirts of the village, the women halt and beat their breasts; but the men go on to the cemetery, and for the present we will follow them. The man at the head of the procession halts as soon as he reaches some cross-roads, and puts down the lāḍu which he has been carrying. The procession then goes on to the cemetery, and the bearers put the bier down in the shade of a tree, whilst the relatives choose the ground for the grave—for it is usual with Ḍheḍs to bury, not to burn the dead; though in some districts burning is not unknown.

They will choose a piece of ground, where the corpse can lie with his head to the north and his feet to the south. The nearest relative, the one who, had it been a Brāhman, would have lit the pyre, strikes five times on the ground, and everyone then begins to dig.

Whilst the grave is being got ready we will return to the women whom we left standing at the outskirts of the village beating their breasts and wailing. There they go through a sad little ceremony, called 'the breaking of the bracelets.' They break the widow's bracelets and take off her jewellery, and then all go back to the house, beating their breasts and lamenting.

Brāhman women usually beat their breasts standing in a row opposite each other; but Ḍheḍ women walk round and round in a circle as they beat their breasts; as they go round they chant a funeral song called *Rājawī*, one woman leading in the song, and the others repeating it after her.

Arrived at the house, they bathe the widow, pouring warm water over her, clothes and all, just as she is. Then they take off her clothes and give her a black shawl-like dress instead, and unless she marries again, she will wear a black sāri for the rest of her life. Ḍheḍs do not shave the heads of young women who are widows; only the old ones have to submit to that indignity.

We have heard much of the sufferings of the high-caste widow, and those sufferings cannot be exaggerated; but few people realise how much a low-caste widow can suffer. Hers is perhaps a darker fate than that of her high-caste sister, who can never re-marry. If the young widow be industrious, and if the parents have paid a high price for her, they may marry her on the very day of her husband's death by force to a younger brother of the dead man. They cannot force her to marry an elder brother.

The young widow's parents-in-law call some witnesses, and then carry the girl, even if screaming and protesting, within the house: there they seat her on the bed-covering beside her deceased husband's brother, and in the face of her struggles tie the corner of his scarf and her shawl-like overdress together. This done, the pair are married, and the girl's own parents cannot take her away and re-marry her to the man of her choice without a divorce, for which they will have to find the money.

The parents-in-law have thus guarded themselves against the loss of a good house or field labourer, and also against the loss of the money they paid down for that worker. The girl is reduced to the level of a beast of burden, and the horrors of slavery are perpetuated.

The two remedies are—a relentless fight against the buying and selling of brides (a sin with which the Christian Church itself is riddled), and the second remedy lies in a firm upholding of the Church's condemnation of marrying a deceased brother's wife. One cannot help

wondering if it were not from some dark primeval background of the horrors of such marriages that the Church has gained some of the force that has enabled it to keep its age-long protest.

The Actual Interment

But now we must leave the widow to her fate, and return to the grave. When the digging of it is complete, the four bearers then circumambulate it three times, bearing the corpse on its stretcher of bamboo; they begin in the same way to walk round it a fourth time, but turn back when they have reached half-way, so actually circumambulate three-and-a-half times. The corpse is then taken off the stretcher, and received into the hands of the bearers. They put three long pieces of cloth under the dead body, and proceed to break the bamboo into three pieces.

Next they break the four coconuts; it is always so arranged that two of these are good, and two of them are bad.

The corpse is then lowered into the grave, and the next of kin has to descend also into the grave and arrange there a leaf from the *tulasī* plant, some water, and a coin. If he can afford it, he places a rupee, but if he is poor (and Ḍheḍs are often very, very poor) he places only a tiny copper coin. He ascends from the grave, and throws five handfuls of dust on to the corpse, and other mourners follow suit also, and throw handfuls of dust on to it. It always seems a beautiful thing that we and the outcastes should follow the same rite, whether we are burying the Unknown Warrior, or doing honour to our greatest King. Perhaps after all it may not be so difficult in the times of our grief to remember our common humanity, and our common parentage.

Then they cover the grave in, and throw flowers and scent on to it. Before finally leaving it they place at the head of the grave a little lamp of melted butter.

Everyone goes home and bathes, and after bathing they mark their foreheads with a white dot. If anyone asks them where they have been, or what they have been doing, they use a pregnant phrase in replying, saying 'they have been out sowing.'

The neighbours who have been to the burial return to the house of mourning, and sit down for a little time, offering consolation before taking their departure.

It is interesting to notice how the news of the death is sent to distant villages. In the case of a young man or woman, a sweeper only can carry the message; but if it be an old man or woman who has died, the tidings are not considered so sombre, and anyone can take the news.

Last Rites

Now occurs a three days' interval, during which the house wherein the death took place is considered impure. No member of the household may bathe, put oil on the hair, or make the auspicious dot on the forehead during that period. The house is too polluted for it to be possible to cook in it, and relatives or friends send cooked food in to the mourners.

So strongly is this idea of the pollution of death held that the writer has known cases where the god of a temple had to be sent to another building, because the temple priest had died.

The Third Day (*Jārat*)

When the third day, however, dawns, the members of the family get up early and bathe. Some male relatives, to the number of five or more, go to the cemetery, taking with them a stick of incense and some scented things and a cake of cowdung. They place these on the grave, and then set a light to them all.

Afterwards they mark their foreheads with the special clay, called *gopi chandan*, and returning homeward, stand outside the gates wailing. Arrived at the house of mourning, they sit there for a short time, and then proceed, still wailing, to their own homes; but notice that, though three days have passed, the house where the death occurred is still unclean.

The Evening of the Third Day

About five o'clock in the evening of the third day the Ḍheḍ priest, a Garuḍa Brāhman, comes to the house of

mourning. (This priest is a most useful person; not only is he the spiritual director of the household, but he is also the sempstress, or rather tailor, of the establishment, and makes quilts or clothes as they are required. Imagine an ordinary parish priest in Ireland confronted with such a task, or imagine rather the family confronted with the clothes he had made!) The first thing he does is to take a tile from the roof of the house, and into its hollow he puts some *grām*, which he lights. He dons what he calls his sacred thread, but this thread of white cotton differs from the ordinary sacred thread of the Brāhman in two particulars: firstly, it is much shorter; and secondly, it is worn round the neck.

The rites of the third evening are noticeable as being concerned mainly with only two people, the priest and the chief mourner. This mourner now comes forward, and the priest puts a similar small sacred thread round his throat. Then the priest seats himself on the ground, and the chief mourner sits opposite the priest, placing the smoking roof-tile between them. The Brāhman repeats a sacred verse, and whilst he is doing this, the mourner pours unhusked rice on the smoking gram in the tile. Then (and this is a most important moment) the priest gets up and fetches the tennis-ball sweet (really a *piṇḍa*), which for three days has remained on the ground where the man actually died.

The priest puts the sweet ball, together with the smoking tile and a vessel of water, into the hands of the chief mourner, and the two start out together. They make for a place where four roads meet; but this must not be the same cross-roads which they passed three days before, and where the other sweet ball was deposited. The chief mourner walks first, carrying the three things, and the Brāhman walks behind him, and no one else ventures to join the sad little procession.

Arrived at the cross-roads, the mourner deposits his three burdens, takes off his sacred thread, and puts that down too. The Brāhman adds his sacred thread also to the little heap, and then makes a circle round the articles with water from the vessel. This done, the two walk home in the same

order, with never a look behind at the danger spot they have left; the mourner indeed feels all the safer that the Brāhman walks behind him, and so is between him and danger.

When they reach home the women plaster the spot where the sweet ball had lain. The Ḍheḍs believe that for three days after a death the dead man's spirit has lingered in the house, and the sweetmeat was placed on the spot where the man died in order to provide that spirit with nourishment. But now the women re-plaster the house, and it is considered clean once more; so they bathe and change their clothes, and the men bathe and shave off not only the hair of their head, but also their moustaches, in order to get rid of all the defilement of death.

A Visit of Condolence

When the third day is over, and the sombre sweetmeat has been safely deposited at the cross-roads, relatives from distant villages feel free to come to the purified house, to offer condolence to the bereaved.

We must notice the gifts these relatives bring in their hands; if they are closely connected with the dead man, they bring loaves, if they are only far-away cousins, they carry uncooked grain. Arrived at the outskirts of the town, the men halt, and begin to wail; but the women proceed, crying and wailing, to the house, and begin to beat their breasts. The men follow shortly afterwards, and sit down in a row outside the house in solemn silence.

A relative of the dead man comes out bearing a water vessel; the male visitors arrange their hands one over the other (as is often done for the Holy Communion), and the relative pours a little water into their outstretched palms. The visitors do not swallow this, but sip it, gargle with it, and eject it. Then they are free to speak, and all sit round and praise the dead.

The women meantime have finished beating their breasts, and go into the house and offer consolation to the bereaved. The consolation they have to offer is such pathetically pitiful consolation, illuminated with no sure and certain hope, and with the very image of the god, who should have been a 'present help,' only too often removed for fear of contagion.

The Twelfth Day Rite

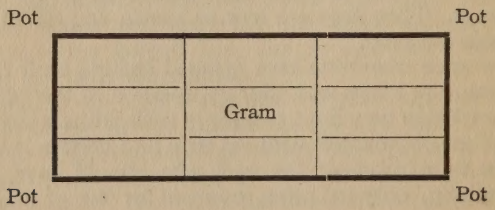
The Ḍheḍs lay special stress on a Twelfth Day rite (or *Bāramuṁ*); but though it is so called, if the twelfth day is not convenient, the feast may be held a month, or even a year after the death. The size of the feast will differ according to the wealth of the dead man's family. If they are really poor, a feast will be made for a small number of guests only, and will cost about forty rupees. But if the family be rich, the whole inhabitants of the Ḍheḍ quarter of the town will be invited, and all the caste-fellows wherever they live, and expenses will mount up to five hundred or even a thousand rupees. All close relatives must be invited.

If the dead man had been eaten by a tiger or a crocodile, the Ḍheḍs are not, like Brāhmans, obliged to provide an artificial corpse of grass, and perform death rites over that; this twelfth day feast is held for him, and it covers all deficiencies. The chief mourner has to provide the food for the feast; in most places it consists chiefly of molasses mixed with wheat flour, and a dish of rice and pulse.

At the feast the chief mourner, who is, of course, generally the son of the dead man—or, failing a son, the nearest male relative—has to give his sister a new shawl-like overdress. The shawl must not be black in colour. From the day of the death the sister has only been wearing an old shawl, and has put no oil on her hair.

The Rite of the Pots

One of the most important funeral rites is known as the *Padmaṇḍvuṁ*. The Ḍheḍ Brāhman orders four small jars from the potter. He draws on the ground the accompanying plan with nine spaces; at each corner he places an empty



pot, and in the centre some smoking gram. He then pours unhusked rice on the gram, and repeats some sacred verses.

For all these services the chief mourner pays about five rupees.

The Śrāddha

The Brāhman takes some of the grām and puts it in the chief mourner's hand, and then he puts a sacred thread of white cotton round the throat of the chief mourner. It is both important and interesting to notice that on this occasion the Ḍheḍ priest himself does not don the sacred thread.

At the time of the Twelfth Day Rite the Brāhman had kept a little of the molasses and wheat flour, and now he uses it. There is certain to be a tulasī plant in the garden, and the Brāhman goes to it, carrying molasses and wheat in a vessel and a pot of water.

Arrived there, the priest puts down half the sweet food opposite the plant, and sprinkles water round it, repeating sacred verses as he does so. Meanwhile the chief mourner puts his sacred thread round the plant, and then picks up the sweet food that the priest had put down opposite it.

This done, both the priest and the chief mourner go back to the dead man's house, and there the chief mourner throws the sweet food that had been offered to the tulasī plant, together with the other portion that had been reserved, on to the roof of the house. As he throws it he calls to the crows to come and eat it, and it is pathetic to watch this ceremony and the eager expectancy with which he and the other mourners watch for the crows to come, for it is by the conduct of the crows that the bereaved gather news of the present happiness or misery of the dead.

When the eighth day of the bright half of the month Bhādrapada (our August–September) comes, a special rite is performed. This is not repeated year after year, but only done once, in the year that the man died.

The chief mourner takes a small quantity of five different

kinds of grain and puts them to steep in water over-night in a metal vessel. Next morning he brings a brass vessel and transfers the grain to that, and then goes round to the houses near at hand, and gives a few grains to each neighbour.

Annual Commemoration

The last rite is only done once, but there is a further commemoration of his death, which must be performed annually (*Śrāvaṇa Śrāddha*). There are, of course, many other funeral rites and ceremonies, which the student will find out for himself; here we are only attempting to enumerate a few typical ones; and with this annual commemoration we may bring our study of them to a close.

Supposing the Ḍheḍ whose life story we have been following through birth, illness, marriage, and death, happened to die on a Monday, in the moonless half of the month Śrāvaṇa (which corresponds to half of our July and half of August), then on some Monday in the same dark half of the month his śrāddha must be performed.

A milk pudding is made, called *Khira*, composed of rice, milk, and sugar, and placed in a vessel. (It is extraordinarily difficult for Westerners to associate such an innocuous and uninspiring thing as a rice pudding with a death ceremony!) The chief mourner puts on his short sacred thread, and takes the pudding and a little jar of water to the tulasī plant growing outside the house. He places a leaf in front of the plant, and arranges a little of the rice pudding on this leaf, and distributes the remainder of the pudding to children, who in India love rice pudding. Then he picks up the leaf with the rice pudding upon it, sprinkles some water from the jar on it, and throwing it on the roof, calls to the crows.

And there we must leave our friend, with whom we have travelled so long. His future is all unknown, and the only consolation to be gathered by those whose hearts his death has broken is derived from watching the movements of crows.

CHAPTER IX

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

THE old reproach that was levelled against Christianity in the days of our Lord is still brought against it in India. Here, too, not many wise or many learned are called; but, as in the Galilean days, so now, the common people hear Him gladly.

He brings them freedom from the tyranny of the higher caste people; freedom too, from absolute slavery, for no farmer sells Christian Ḍheḍs; freedom from their fear of evil and malicious powers.

But the great appeal that Christ makes to the Ḍheḍ, a caste with a spiritual genius, is the way in which He, the Desire of All Nations, exactly fulfils their deepest longings. Have they sought for the true Teacher? In Christ they find Him revealed; for the Word they find the Word Incarnate; for the Light they find in Him the Light of the World. Whatever qualities these humble oppressed folk have felt that the true Guru must possess, they find exactly revealed in Him. We shall find ourselves amply repaid in the strengthening that will come to our faith and the larger vision we shall obtain of the desire of all nations, if we follow the story of one or two of these common people.

We have seen how the Ḍheḍs have a common stock of domestic ceremonies, but how, provided they follow these for birth, marriage and divorce, they are free to join any 'Way' they like. Let us study the life story of adherents of one or two of these different 'Ways' who found in Christ the Truth and the Life.

THE STORY OF UKĀ BHAGAT

There was a holy man or bhagat called Ukā Bhagat, himself the son of a holy man called Dudhā Bhagat, who was a follower of the Kabīr Panth.

There was one *śloka* that he was very fond of quoting, a verse about the True Word, that seemed to him to sum up the substance of his creed. Translated it runs:

> The Word is the Key, the Word is the Lock,
> The Word by the Word created the Light;
> He who knows the mystery of the Word,
> He can know the Creator and God.

Ukā believed that God was the Word, and that the Word was Light, and every morning after careful ablution he read portion by portion in the sacred book, *Rāvaṇio*. He believed, too, that God was formless, and ought not to be worshipped under the form of idols, though, as he himself was a Ḍheḍ, and lived amongst Ḍheḍs, he conformed to their customs for all his domestic ceremonies.

Ukā paid special attention to a ceremony called *Pāṭha*, a ceremony which strangely resembles the Holy Communion. It was celebrated in the following manner:

Some one follower of the Kabīr Panth would invite the others to his house. In the centre of the room a stool covered with a clean cloth was placed, and on it was put a little saucer-lamp of melted butter. Round this lamp was arranged a garland of flowers, and in front of it was the sacred book, the *Rāvaṇio*.

A guru then took his seat on a cushion before the stool, and each member of the congregation bowed to him on entering, saying, 'Salutation to the True Guru!' and then took his seat on the ground.

When all had assembled, the guru would read from the sacred book, verse by verse, and the followers would repeat it after him. Then they would turn to hymns, and sing from the Kabīr hymn-book, keeping up the singing all night long.

At the end of the reading and the singing came the Rite of the Cup, when the guru took a cup of water, dipped the fingers and thumb of his right hand into it, and put a few drops from it in the right hands of his disciples. Each disciple knelt to receive the water from the cup, holding out his right hand supported by his left, and having sipped it from his palm, put his right hand to his head. The sign that a new disciple was admitted into fellowship was made by giving him this water from the cup to drink.

It is a beautiful symbol of union; for all castes receive the cup together, and join in this ceremony of the Pāṭha, touching each other without scruple. And, although willingness to take water from another is the crux of caste feeling, yet in this ceremony a disciple from the Brāhman caste is willing to receive it from the hands of a guru who was originally a Ḍheḍ.

This is followed by the distribution of sacred food. A coconut is broken and mixed with sugar and distributed to those present; or, if there be no coconut, sugar alone is distributed. One point is noticeable, that whereas the water from the cup was only given to professed disciples, the sacred food is given to everybody who is present.

Now, once Ukā heard a missionary preaching, and it made him very angry, for the missionary said that God was Light, and then he spoke of the Word becoming incarnate; he told too of the creation of all things through the Word. As the man went on explaining the faith that bore so strange a likeness to his own, Ukā could bear it no longer, and at last broke out into angry speech. 'What do you know,' he asked, 'of our religion? You have come from the West and know nothing of the East, and yet you are talking all the time about my faith!' The missionary persuaded him to read the Gospel of St. John, and in it he found the story of the Word. As he read it, he said to himself, 'Here is what I have been searching for all my life.'

Then at last he said to his wife, 'I think a mad dog has bitten me, my mind is all upset. The truth that I have sought for all my life I have found at last in this Religion of the Word.'

His quest was now ended, and he felt that he must become a follower of the Lord Christ, the Word; but he asked his wife what she would do. She replied that what he did she would do, and whom he followed she would follow.

The whole village was astounded at the news that their bhagat was going to follow Christ. The landowners came to him and said: 'We have always honoured your house, the house of Dudhā Bhagat, even as the house of the sage Bibhīśaṇa was honoured in Ceylon. What is it we now hear

of you? What do you need? Is it money? We will give it you. Is it a new house? We will provide it.'

Ukā Bhagat replied: 'What unconsciously I have been seeking all my days that I have found. Those things that you offer are perishable, but I have grasped a life that is eternal.'

Thereafter Ukā gave himself up to preaching that Christ was the Word, and so convincingly did he show how every spiritual aspiration which the Kabīr Panth was groping after was actually offered by Christ, that a great many of his old disciples crossed over with him to take sides with our Lord, and he became the leader of a movement amongst them.

Dudhā Bhagat and Swāmī Nārāyan

We have seen how Ukā Bhagat became a Christian. His old father Dudhā Bhagat was a follower of Swāmī Nārāyan, and the fact that in one family one member should be a follower of Kabīr and another of Swāmi Nārāyan would cause no difficulty; both would practice the same domestic rites, and only differ in their sect. It is this which makes it so difficult for a Ḍheḍ to be a consistent Christian, for he often cannot see at first that Christ not only demands the assent of his intellect to His doctrines, but that His law also cuts across any worship of idols at birth, marriage, or death.

Some of the newer Missions have perhaps not always realised the patient persistent instruction a convert from the Ḍheḍs needs on this point.

Dudhā became a follower of Swāmī Nārāyan in the following way: Sahajānand Swāmī Nārāyan himself once visited Karamsad—the town where Dudhā lived—on his way from Vartāl. The important farmers and landowners would not receive him; but Dudhā, hearing that a great religious teacher had come to the town, went to greet him, bearing a garland and a present of sugar. The swāmī asked him of what caste he was. He replied that he was a Meghavāḷa (i.e. Ḍheḍ). But the swāmī answered, 'You are not an Untouchable; those others are unclean, for they will not receive me; but it is not so with you.'

Swāmī Nārāyan seems to have been a man of great personal magnetism, and he so won the heart of Dudhā that

he then and there asked for initiation into the sect, and took the five great vows.

Dudhā's younger son, Rāmā, fell under the same magnetism, and he used often to go to Vartāl to do reverence to Swāmī Nārāyan. In fact so great was Rāmā's love of the swāmi, that he actually believed him to be a god, and he used to tell the following story to show his powers: There was a famous robber called Joban, whose name is still remembered in the district round Vartāl; and once he came by night to steal a splendid Kāṭhiāwārī mare belonging to the swāmī. Though it was pitch dark, the swāmī saw him, and called out to him, 'Joban, if you need a horse, take mine!' This combination of omniscience and generosity made a still deeper impression on Rāmā, who decided to become a sādhu. He received initiation, and went to Gadhadsi; but he was very grieved to find when there that, though a sādhu, he was still treated as an Untouchable. All the other members of the Order kept apart from him and would not touch him. At last even the head of the temple advised him to go back to his own home and live with his family.

In the meantime his elder brother, Ukā, had become a Christian, and one or two of the things that the Christians said influenced Rāmā strongly. A padre, for instance, pointed out that Rāmā, as a Swāmī Nārāyani, was trusting solely to the Way of Works (*Karma Mārga*), and yet the Swāmī Nārāyan sect themselves taught that this way could never lead to a permanent heaven; and Rāmā learnt from this man to see much of the beauty of the Way of Grace.

Then he came in contact with a famous Indian Christian, Nathubhai, who pointed out how true the swāmī's teaching had been that a guru was necessary, but that that Guru Swāmī Nārāyan, was dead, whereas there was another Guru, who, though He too had died, was alive for evermore. He taught him a sacred verse that runs as follows:

> In the heavenly shrine there is one who dwells,
> Needing support from no one,
> Three persons worship him:
> Rāma, Kabīr, and the Word.

And this verse, mentioning as it does, three names specially revered amongst all Ḍheḍs, seemed to point to our Lord as receiving homage from the three.

The elder brother Ukā helped him to realise how all the prophecies believed in by the Ḍheḍs were fulfilled by Christ, the Desire of All Nations, and reminded him of the beautiful saying current amongst them:

> A virgin shall bear a son who shall be very powerful and entirely holy. He shall re-establish righteousness, and through His death He shall be proclaimed through all the earth.

The Bijamārga Sect

Others again amongst the Ḍheḍs belong to a sect called Bijamārga. Amongst these, too, are found prophecies that seem to them to point to the sinless incarnation fulfilled in Christ. One of the objects of their worship is the horse, Rāmade Pir, on which the incarnate sinless *Niśkalanka Avatāra* shall appear. Members of this sect have found to their amazement that the sacred verses in whose truth they trust most implicitly are absolutely fulfilled by Christ:

> Such a guru is necessary as can cleanse a sword from rust, and can destroy all the sin of the world in a moment.

And again:

> There is only one true Guru in the whole world; if any know Him, He will steer his bark safely across the ocean of life.

APPENDIX

THE SONG KĀYAMPAVĀḌO

Prefatory Note

These hymns of the Sinless Incarnation are universally known throughout Gujarāt and Kāṭhiāwār. One comes across them early in one's missionary career, and if ever one is inclined to forget them, eager evangelists keep the memory of them fresh; for every Christian preacher finds in these prophecies of the last things a welcome point of contact with his Hindu audience.

They will always be of interest to the Bible student; their strong apocalyptic element recalls many passages in both the Hebrew and Christian visions of the end.

To the student of mythology and comparative religion they are a veritable mine of suggestive ideas. Here, for example, is a variation on the usual list of Hindu Incarnations. Here is an amazing medley of Muhammadan and Hindu lore: and here, above all, is a vision of the great Reconciliation that is to come to pass. What lover of India or seeker after peace anywhere can resist their appeal!

It is well that this song of the Sinless Incarnation has been rescued, for it is possible that year by year it is being less frequently sung. It is still used at the festival of the Niṡkalanka Incarnation, but certainly the text of the song is, as it were, becoming increasingly corrupt, and its first meaning is being more and more deeply buried out of sight.

G. W.

GUJARĀTI TEXT

Sarasvatī Sāradā Gaṇesane namuṁ akśara ālomāi;
Nakaḷaṅga nāma nīrantara gāie gāe pāvana thāya.
Daśa svārī dīnakī gāie Kāyama pabāḍāsāra;
Bhaṭṭha paṇḍita ne kājī mullaṁ te nava pāme pāra.
Sāmarā nagarathī āi merī Mīrāṁ Nakaḷaṅga jāko nāma re;
Dīdhā ḍerā dīnakā sahu nara kare salāmare.
Rāma Rahīma Akbara pharamāṁnā Haname līyā bolāi;
Doḍa doḍa Hanamanta khaḍe to ākhī ālamaku le bolāi re.
Koṇa satā ne koṇa sapetā koṇa rahā bharapurā,
Satye ālama satye ghoḍā sata sāhebakānurā re.
Koṇa setānī koṇa harāmī koṇa te kāphara hoya;
Setāna harāmī kāphara Kāḷiṅgā dusarā nahi koi re.
Uñch nicha ne uttama madhyama ghare āve Kāhema rāya re;
Hindu Musalmāna donuṁ puṁmaḍā bhejyā navālākhāya re.

Gujī ṭopa ne bhakhtara pākhara pehera līyā karatārāre;
Jamīna āsmāna dhrujavā lāgyāṁ āpe huvā svāra re.
Pādaśājī to mhole vase āve gorukhāṁna re,
Hābela Kāina donuṁ āve sāhebakā daḷa māṁhe re.
Sāta hāthakā chharā hoigā chhatrīsa hāthkā garaja re;
Harāḍa hāthakā khaṇa hoigā batrīsa hāthakā marada re.
Tera maṇakā tīra hośe trīsa maṇakī kabāna re;
Aisā yoddhā āvegā Kāyamakā pharamāna re.
Māṇḍaḷa ghaḍha mukāma saṁiṁyākā pachhama dīśā ṭhāma re;
Ati ghaṇā yoddhā āvegā Kāyamakā pharamāna re.

Bāra karoḍa Bāḷī rājā āve jamīna degā māga re;
Jaḷataṇī jogaṇi āve āve navakaḷa nāga re.
Mātā Kuṁtā chosaṭha jogaṇī utarathī te āvegā;
Traśuḷa khapara hātha rākhī devī ḍamaru ḍākha bajāvegā.
Sahasra lākha sehedeva jośī āvaśe chakara pustaka sātha;
Gadādhārī Bhīma āvaśe lāvalaśkara sātha re.
Koṇa koṇa nara āve āve alakhane adhīra re;
Sāṁma Sukhadeva Garuḍa Gorakha māṁhī āve Hanamanta vīra re.
Ghore ghore nara jāgegā unakā pāme nahi pāra re;
Khāṁna Khojā Saiyada Śekha Mahameda māryā lakhachāra re.

Senyā chāle jami hāle āpe dānava bhogegā ;
Juṭhuṁ bole harāma chāle Kāyama lekhāṁ māgegā.
Sahasrakarṇe suraja ugaśe dharatī tāmbā varaṇī hoigā ;
Sācheku merā sāheba maḷaśe juṭhā jala jāegā.
Pāpī pākhaṇḍī chora unaku ghāṇāṁ ghālegā ;
Mīrāṁ merī gapata sarupī Kāḷiṅgāku māregā.
Sarasvatine Sābaramatī raṇa kheta Mulatāna ;
Deva gāḷīgāne khedaśe tamo matī karo gumāna.
Matī karo gumāna huṁ kaśuṁ nā jāṇuṁ Kālādāsa ;
Nārāṇe gāyā Pavāḍā bojā uṭhāvanavālā.
Bojā uṭhāve moja pāve nītyakā nurā pāve ;
Dāsa Nāraṇa haraku smare haracharaṇe vāsa thāe.

Mālpavāḍo

Keśokeśo karī gāuṁ merī Mirāṁ akala nahi ārupe ;
Nahi koi dānava nahi koi devā māna rahyā bahurupe.
Pādaśāha kero pādaśāha sau rāyā kero rāya ;
E pādaśāhakā padahaiśārā bhejyā navābā khāya.
Tuṁ umarāva Dilhīko pādaśāha terī umada kaisi ;
Lakha chorāsī jīva upajāyā jaḷathaḷano je vāsī.
Trīguṁṇakā eka nagara banāvyā sāta sāhīrakī khāi ;
Janmo janma terī sevā na jāṇi akaḷa kaḷyo nā jāya.
Sonā sīhāsana māro sāheba poḍhe Lakśmī pāva paruśe ;
Suraja chandra be dīpaka rachīyā chamara ḍhoḷe pavanā.
Soḷa hajāra harāmanā bhogī avara dujyā na jāṇe ;
Gandrapa base jaisī indri strīsukha bahu māṇe.
Sahu sukha māṇe sahu koi jāṇe vaḷī kāhve brahmachārī ;
Khedane akheda brahmā veda lyone vichārī.
Jamī āsmāna mhārā sāṁyā poḍhe Lakśmī pāva paruśe :
Bhakta navī chaḷa jāga rahyā bandā rahe tori pāse.

Hāji Mahamadaśāha Musā pegaṁbara sāchī Musalamānī ; Hindu
Musalamāna donuṁ puṁmaḍā chākarī kare ekadhyānī.
Rāta divasa karuṁ terī sevā baḍe baḍe rāya sohī ;
Surā naravīra paṇḍita pegambara nāma jape sahu koi.
Teri daragāmāṁ hīkamata hāle hemara chāle tamārā ;
Bāvā Ādama bībī Havā pāñcha pāṇḍava saradārā
Je deva nāme hai rakhavāḷā indravajīra tumārā ;
Dharuṁ Amīrakha, Pahīlāda, Bībhīśaṇa, vāko antanā pāyā.
Jama koṭavāḷa bolākara lāve kāḷa chalāve chīṭṭhi ;

Alā dhaṇīkī sevā na jāṇī mārathī bhāṅge pīchhā.
Pīchhā bhāṅge hīkamata māṅge deva pāse sīdhāva;
Devakā nahi mhola māḷiā mīrānta sārī buṭāi.

Vidhavidhanāṁ vājīntro vāge āgaḷa Rambhā nāche;
Āṭhe pahora utare āratī āsmāna dhaṇīne chhāje.
Āsmāna chaḍhīne āpe bethā tyāṁ koi āve na jāve;
Terā sevaka rahe terī pāse rojā puṁmaḍā pāve.
Nurā pīrako pāranā pāve surā hai asaṁkhyā;
Kumbhakaraṇa Hiraṇyakśa dānava unakā anta nā lakhyā.
Meṁ pavāḍo gāuṁ merī mīrāṁ merī jibhā haietī;
Svārī karake jetā māryā jetā harāmakhora hotā.

Pahelīne svārī mīrāṁ Sankhāsurako māryo dariyā bhītara pesī;
Veda lāvī Brahmāne āpyā Brahmā rahyā mana hasī.
Bījīne svāri mīrāṁ Meru ghaḍa pheravāyo;
Dariyākerī betī paraṇī chauda ratana ghera lāvyo.
Trījīne svārī mīrāṁ tama dhyāna to kīdhāṁ;
Kalpataṇo anta āṇyo Baṅkasurasu līdhā.
Chothīne svārī mīrāṁ pāñche vāchā pāḷī;
Haraṇā kaṁśane hāthe māryo Mahīlādanā vanamāḷī.
Pāñchamīne svāri mīrāṁ baḷīnī upara chālyo;
Baḷarājāne bāṁhe jhālī Pātāḷa lai vāsyo.
Chhaṭṭhine svāri mīrāṁ gautaṇi vhāra kīdhī;
Bhumi je kśatritaṇi lai viprane dīdhī.

Sātamīne svārī mīrāṁ rīñchha vānara lai āvyo;
Rāvaṇanāṁ daśa mastaka khedī Sītā vāḷī ghera lāvyo.
Āṭhamīne svārī mīrāṁ kare Govaradhana toḷyo;
Kamaḷa śāpa Kaḷīnāga nāthyo Kauṁśano vaṁśa roḷyo.
Navamīne svārī mīrāṁ Tuḷasī jāpa japāyā;
Sarva ālamaku jāpa japāyā to bāndhekā bandha chhodāvyā.
Dasamī svārī mīrāṁ chākarī musārā dīnā;
Te merā dātā meṁ terā bhaktā hamaku kāṁinā kīnā.
Amaku kāṁinā kīje terā sevaka huṁ sarajanahāra;
Mana ichchhāphaḷa deje, Svāmī Mālataṇā dātāra.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I bow down to Sarasvatī, Sāradā and Ganesh; O Mother, give me an imperishable name! We praise the name of

Naklank—he who is without blemish, and by praising him we become holy. No Brahmin, learned man, *Kāzi*, nor Muhammadan theologian can understand the meaning of this Kāyampavāḍo.

My Miram came from the city of Samara, and pitched the tent of Naklank. All the people salute it. Rām, Rahīm and Akbar were ordered to call Hanuman, and when Hanuman stopped running all the earth was called forth.

Who is true? Who is holy? The earth is full of the light and the truth of God. Who is satanic? Who is wicked? Who is roguish? Kalinga is satanic, wicked and roguish. The King Kayam will meet all—high and low and middle-class people, and Hindus and Muhammadans will sit down and take food together.

The Creator put on a helmet and armour, and when having saddled his steed he mounted it, the whole earth began to shake. The Emperor lives in a palace. Abel and Cain come in the army of the Lord. There will be a knife seven cubits long with a blade thirty-six cubits long. A man thirty-two cubits tall will have a sword eighteen cubits long. There will be a bow weighing thirty maunds and an arrow weighing thirteen maunds. Kayam has ordered a warrior wielding these weapons to come. He will lodge in the fort of Mandal. Kayam will order many other warriors to come also.

Twelve crores of Bali kings will come, and the earth will make way for them. The water-nymph will come and also the nine-hooded cobra. Mother Kunta and sixty-four nymphs from the north will come and also Bhima with his mace. A hundred million Sahadev astrologers with their books will come. Sāṁma, Sukhadeva, Garuḍa, Gorakh and the valiant Hanuman will come. Out of every tomb a living man will emerge. Their number will be countless. Four hundred thousand Muhammadan Khans, Khojas, Sayads and Shekhs will be killed.

When the army advances the whole earth will tremble, demons will flee, and the wicked will be brought to account by Kayam. The sun will rise with a thousand rays and the earth will be copper-coloured. God will meet the truthful and crush the sinful, the heretical and the robbers. He will

kill Kalinga on the battlefield of Multan, which is between the Sarasvatī and the Sabarmati rivers.

Depart pride! I know nothing. Kalidas Narayan the poet has sung the Pavada which removes the burden. He who takes up the burdens of others gets light and joy. Kalidas, the servant of God says, 'We gain admittance to the presence of God through meditation.'

Mālpavāḍo

How shall I sing thy praise? O, my Miram, thou art incomprehensible; thou hast no form. There is neither deity nor demon. Thou art worshipped in many forms. Thou art the King of kings and the Emperor of emperors; these eat the food given them by thee. Thou art the Emperor of Delhi; thy subjects number eighty-four hundred thousand. Thou inhabitest both land and sea; thou didst make a city of the three elements and a ditch out of the seven seas. The people did not serve thee in several births. Thou art incomprehensible.

My Lord reclines on a throne of gold and Lakśmī shampoos him, while the sun and moon are his lights, and the winds fan him. Sixteen thousand people of the wicked one enjoy sensual pleasures. They know only such pleasures. All the people know that they live thus, and yet call themselves celibates.

Think of Brahma, who is destructible, and at the same time indestructible. He sleeps on the earth as well as in the heavens, and Lakśmī shampoos him. His devotees are immovable, and the servants who wait on him are ever awake.

Haji, Mohamed, Musa the prophet, Hindus and Muhammadans alike serve thee with one mind. I, too, serve thee day and night. Great kings, all the gods, all heroes, learned men and prophets meditate on thy name continually. Adam, Eve and the five Pandavas are thy watchmen, and Indra is thy minister. Dhruva, Amirakha, Prabhad and Bibhishana have failed to understand thee fully. Yama is thy policeman, and he calls forth death. He did not know how to serve God, his master. He goes back to God and asks for an implement; but God has neither palace nor property.

Different kinds of musical instruments are played upon, and dancing girls dance. An offering befitting the lord of heaven is presented during all the eight periods of the day. Thou, Lord, art sitting there in the heavens. There thy servants come and go. Fasting men can approach thee. Gods there are innumerable; but none can understand Nurā Pīr. The end of Kumbhkarna and the demon Hiranyax was not recorded.

I sing with my tongue the song of adoration, in which my Lord's incarnations are described and his victories over the wicked are related.

In the first incarnation he killed Sankhāsur, and entering the sea brought forth the Vedas and presented them to Brahma, who was pleased.

In the second incarnation he turned the Meru mountain around, and married the daughter of the sea, and brought home fourteen jewels.

In the third incarnation he brought Kalpa to an end and captured Bankasura.

In the fourth incarnation he kept his promise and killed Hiranyax.

In the fifth incarnation he trampled on King Bali and thrust him into Pātāḷa.

In the sixth incarnation he went to help the cows, and gave to the Brahmins the earth which belonged to the Kshatriyas.

In the seventh incarnation he came with bears and monkeys, and, having cut the ten heads off Rāvaṇa, brought Sītā to her home.

In the eighth incarnation he weighed the Govardhan mountain in his hands and bridled the black cobra, which is the curse of the lotus.

In the ninth incarnation he worshipped Tulsi and made the whole world to worship it too; also he broke the bonds of those who were in bondage.

In the tenth incarnation he rewarded his humble servants.

Thou art my lord, and I am thy devotee. Harm me not; harm me not. Thy servant lives in thy presence, and so, O lord of Mala, the poet, fulfil the desires of my heart.

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